NATION

POCSO applies if commercial sex victim is minor: SC

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BUSINESS

Govt cuts windfall tax on petrol, diesel, ATF exports

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SPORTS

Satwik-Chirag end title drought with maiden Singapore Open crown

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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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EE SALA-NU CUP NAMDE

Virat's chase helps RCB defend IPL title, beat GT by 5 wickets

AHMEDABAD, 31 MAY

It was a night dotted with chilling certainty.

Royal Challengers Bengaluru translated their domination from Day 1 of this IPL into a second successive title, and Virat Kohli anchored that five-wicket romp over Gujarat Titans with a patented chase masterclass of unbeaten 75 here on Sunday.

If the Titans' innings of 155 for eight was filled with trepidation, Royal Challengers' 161 for five in 18 overs was full of confidence.

And those words are forever entwined with Kohli's batting and the latest evidence was his 42-ball unbeaten innings.

As he has done throughout his career, the batting super star strode out with an unflinching desire to take his side home.

That purpose was evident in his dismantling of Kagiso Rabada with a sequence of 4, 4, 6, 4, right after his opening partner Venkatesh Iyer handed the South African a similar punishment in the second over that yielded 18 runs.

Kohli and Venkatesh added 62 runs in just 4.3 overs to rain even on the distant dreams of the Titans.

Once Rabada was nullified in three straight overs of his, the Titans did not have enough ammunition in the Power Play, in which RCB amassed 70 for two, to make an impact.

The dismissal of Venkatesh and Devdutt Padikkal followed by the quick departure of skipper Rajat Patidar and Krunal Pandya saw RCB slipping to 91 for four.

But amid this little cavern of chaos, Kohli stood firm like a fort, stopping GT's advances, and the 37-year-old reached his fifth fifty of the season with pulled four off pacer Arshad Khan. Tim David (24, 17b) produced a mini storm that eased the pressure on Kohli, who survived a scare as Shubman Gill's catch off Arshad was found to have bumped on the grass in the umpire's review. Virat soon so befittingly fetched the winning moment for RCB with a six off Arshad. —*PTI*

>>>*More on Page 8*

RASIKH'S SHOW

OVERS	4
RUNS	27
WICKETS	3
Economy	6.75

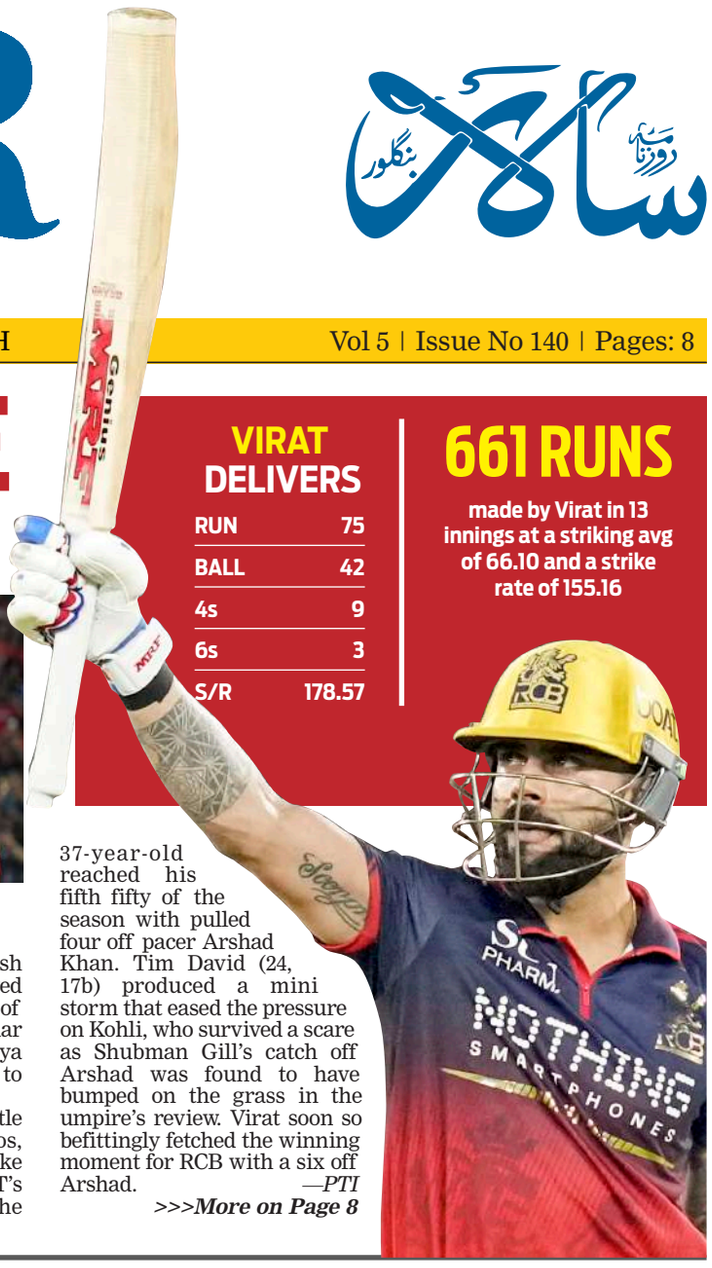
RCB players celebrate after winning IPL final against GT —*PTI*

VIRAT DELIVERS

RUN	75
BALL	42
4s	9
6s	3
S/R	178.57

661 RUNS

made by Virat in 13 innings at a striking avg of 66.10 and a strike rate of 155.16



Israel makes deepest Lebanon invasion in 26 yrs

BEIRUT, 31 MAY

Israeli troops have captured a strategic mountain topped with a Crusader-built castle in southern Lebanon in their deepest incursion into the country in more than a quarter century, the military said Sunday. The capture of Beaufort castle near the city of Nabatiyeh came after days of intense fighting and air-strikes in nearby villages where Israeli troops fought Hezbollah members in the rugged area. It marks a major gain for Israel in the latest Israel-Hezbollah war, which began in early March. Israel and Lebanon have been at war since Israel was created in 1948, and are currently holding direct talks in Washington. —*PTI*

>>>*MORE ON PAGE 6*

India-Bangladesh border talks in Delhi next week

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

India and Bangladesh are expected to hold their bi-annual Director General-level border talks in Delhi between 8 and 11 June, the first since the BNP government took office in Dhaka earlier this year. The meeting between Border Security Force (BSF) DG Praveen Kumar and Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) chief Maj Gen Mohammad Ashrafuzzaman Siddiqui will discuss border fencing, infiltration, cross-border crimes, attacks on BSF personnel and the handover of illegal migrants. India shares a 4,096 km border with Bangladesh, including unfenced and difficult terrain stretches. Officials said a joint record of discussions will be signed on 11 June. Sources said this will be the first high-level border meeting since the BNP came to power in February, with the last talks held in Dhaka in August 2025. India is expected to raise issues of attacks on BSF personnel, illegal crossings, insurgent activity and drone intrusions, while Bangladesh may flag alleged killings of its nationals. —*PTI*

No proposal so far on Cabinet under DKS: Kharge

KALABURAGI, 31 MAY

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge said on Sunday that no proposal had been received regarding the composition of the new Karnataka ministry under Chief Minister-designate DK Shivakumar.

He also indicated that decisions on ministers, deputy chief ministers and key appointments would be taken after the 3 June swearing-in.

Addressing reporters here, Kharge said discussions were underway on various aspects of government formation, but no proposal had been placed before the party leadership so far.

Kharge said the party would get clarity only after the swearing-in ceremony. "All these matters are being discussed. We will know after 3 June," he said.

Referring to the possibility of expanding the cabinet in phases, he said, "Whether he (CM-designate) will appoint eight or 10 ministers, we have not received their proposal. Once it comes, one phase may be completed first, and then after 15 days or a month later, another phase may be taken up." Asked whether a framework for accommodating hopefuls had been worked out, Kharge said discussions were taking place, but no final decision had been conveyed to the leadership.

On the issue of appointing a new KPCC president after Shivakumar assumes office as chief minister, Kharge said a change in leadership was natural, and the party is searching for a successor. —*PTI*

>>>*More on Page 2*

Karnataka CM-designate DK Shivakumar meets Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge in New Delhi —*ANI*

With 4 days of talks, India & US eye to seal deal

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

The chief negotiators of the US and India will begin four-day talks here on Monday on finalising details of the interim trade pact, whose framework was agreed upon in February.

The US team will be led by its chief negotiator Brendan Lynch. India's chief negotiator is Darpan Jain, who is an additional secretary in the Department of Commerce.

The two sides are "expected to finalise the details of the interim agreement and take forward the negotiations on market access, non-tariff measures, customs and trade facilitation, investment promotion, and economic security alignment," the commerce ministry said.

On 7 February, India and the US issued a joint statement finalising the framework of the first phase of the bilateral trade agreement (BTA). Now, both sides will have to finalise the legal text for that deal.

According to that framework, the US had agreed to reduce tariffs on India to 18 per cent from 50 per cent. It had removed the 25 per cent tariffs on Indian goods for buying Russian oil and will cut the remaining 25 per cent to 18 per cent. — *PTI*

CBSE said it had been 'closely monitoring' vulnerabilities flagged in the public domain—*PTI*

CBSE admits security gaps after online marking portal hacked

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) on Sunday acknowledged cybersecurity vulnerabilities in its service provider's OnMark portal, used for on-screen marking of Class 12 board examination answer sheets, stating that the issues have been contained and further weaknesses are being examined.

The clarification came amid recent concerns over discrepancies flagged in the evaluation process, including student allegations that scanned answer sheets did not match their handwriting. Students also reported portal failures, delayed payment confirmations and instances of excess fee charges during re-evaluation requests.

In a statement, CBSE said it had been "closely monitoring" vulnerabilities flagged in the public domain and confirmed that an expert team of cybersecurity professionals from various government bodies and IITs had been deployed to strengthen the system. The board said efforts were underway to move the platform to a more secure setup.

"The identified vulnerabilities have been contained, and other exploitable weaknesses are being ruled out," CBSE said, adding that it was grateful to "alert citizens and ethical hackers" who highlighted the issues and that it had contacted some of them directly. Others were asked to report concerns via official channels.

The development follows claims by a cybersecurity researcher that the portal was publicly accessible and could be vulnerable to examiner account takeover. The researcher said he had reported the issues to CERT-In. CBSE earlier maintained that the system was secure and backed by robust safeguards, but Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan later acknowledged discrepancies and promised strict action against those responsible. —*PTI*

Gen Subramani takes charge as new CDS

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

Gen NS Raja Subramani, widely known as an expert on Pakistan and China, took charge on Sunday as India's new Chief of Defence Staff with a mandate to implement the military theaterisation plan and boost tri-services synergy.

He succeeds Gen Anil Chauhan, who signed off after completing his tenure as the country's senior-most military commander on Saturday.

Gen Subramani was serving as the Military Advisor at the National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS). He retired as the Vice Chief of Army Staff on 31 July 2025.

Shortly after taking charge, he said the transformation of the armed forces and organisational reforms to enhance tri-services synergy will be his primary focus.

We will accelerate the development, induction and integration of indigenous weapons, he said in a brief media statement. "Our armed forces consistently demonstrated professionalism and operational decisiveness in safeguarding our national interests. We are committed to protect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of our country," he said. Gen Subramani also said that he would also work towards accelerating the development, induction, and integration of indigenous weapon systems. As Chief of Defence Staff, Gen Subramani's primary task will be to implement theaterisation by rolling out integrated military commands.

In his career spanning over 40 years, Gen Subramani held a host of Command, Staff and Instructional appointments. —*PTI*

>>>*More on Page 3*

NS Raja Subramani —*PTI*

2 dozen Kanpur BEd aspirants fall in drain after slab breaks

KANPUR, 31 MAY

About two dozen candidates appearing for the UP BEd Entrance Examination fell into a sewage drain after an old concrete slab collapsed in Kanpur on Sunday, police said.

The incident occurred near the HN Mishra PG College in MacRobertganj, where candidates had gathered at a photocopy shop in the Nagar Nigam Market area to take copies.

Police said the old concrete slab over a drain collapsed due to the crowd, and around 20 to 25 candidates fell into the sewage-filled drain.

Four candidates sustained minor injuries, while several others had their clothes, books, admit cards and other documents damaged.

"The slab collapsed due to overcrowding. Some people suffered minor injuries, but there was no loss of life," Police Commissioner Raghubir Lal said.

He said the candidates later proceeded to their examination centres. One guardian was taken to hospital, police said.

Police said despite the disruption, the BEd entrance examination was conducted as scheduled across 19 centres in the city. —*PTI*

Students fell into a sewer after a dilapidated concrete slab collapsed outside an examination centre in Kanpur —*SCREENGRAB*

BALEN SHAH CLAIMS

'India, Nepal encroached each other's land'

KATHMANDU, 31 MAY

Nepal Prime Minister Balendra Shah on Sunday said he has learnt that Nepal too has "encroached" Indian territory, as he addressed Parliament on the long-running boundary dispute involving Lipulekh, Limpiyadhura and Kalapani.

In his first appearance in the ongoing session, Shah called for a joint review of the border issue by India and Nepal with historians, surveyors and experts, and also called for UK's involvement in the mediation process.

"After becoming prime minister, I came to know that not only has India encroached on Nepal's land, but Nepal has also encroached on India's land in multiple places. Both sides need to sit down and look into the matter," Shah said.

Shah said Nepal had also reached out to China and the UK over the dispute.

The border dispute centres on the tri-junction region near Uttarakhand, with India maintaining that Lipulekh, Limpiyadhura and Kalapani are part of its territory. New Delhi did not immediately respond on Sunday, but earlier rejected Nepal's claims, calling them "unilateral and untenable".

Earlier this month, Nepal's Foreign Ministry said Limpiyadhura, Lipulekh and Kalapani "have been integral parts of Nepal's territory since the Sugauli Treaty of 1816" and urged India not to carry out construction, trade or pilgrimage activities there. It also informed China that the area is Nepali territory.

India's Ministry of External Affairs reiterated that Lipulekh has been a "long-standing route" for the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra since 1954, responding after India announced the 2026 pilgrimage schedule, including routes via Lipulekh and Nathu La, later welcomed by the Chinese Embassy in New Delhi.

Shah told Parliament Nepal had sent a diplomatic note to India and received a response, adding both sides had agreed to resolve the issue through dialogue with experts. —*Salar News*

Bengaluru prepares for DK Shivakumar's term as Chief Minister with cutouts of the Kanakapura leader put up outside his Sadashivanagar residence, as visitors throng to his house, on Sunday —*MOHAMMED ASAD*

New Cabinet: Siddaramaiah, DKS to head to Delhi today

DKS invites Rahul, Kharge to inaugurate KPCC Bhavan

BENGALURU, 31 MAY

Chief Minister-designate DK Shivakumar and senior Congress leader Siddaramaiah will meet the party High Command in Delhi on 1 June to discuss Cabinet formation, sources said on Sunday.

Intense lobbying for Cabinet berths and Deputy Chief Minister posts continued, with some leaders meeting Shivakumar and others reaching out to Siddaramaiah. For example, the National Billavar Mandal urged the party to appoint MLC BK Hariprasad as a Deputy Chief Minister, demanding representation for the Billavas community along the coastal belt. Senior Congress leaders such as MB Patil, Dinesh Gundu Rao and Madhu Bangarappa met Shivakumar at his residence, sources said.

Congress MLAs, including Sharan Prakash Patil, Raghavendra Hitnal and Basanagouda Daddesh, are also travelling to Delhi to meet the party leadership, sources said.

Shivakumar, who is also the Karnataka State Congress President, is all set to take oath as the next CM on 3 June following his election as the Congress Legislature Party leader here.

On Sunday, Shivakumar inspected the site where a KPCC Bhavan is set to be constructed and said that he invited Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Mallikarjun Kharge to lay the foundation stones a day after the swearing-in ceremony.

"On the eve of 100 years of Gandhi ji becoming the President, we decided to have 100 offices throughout the state," he told reporters. "Since we are unable to accommodate our leaders at the Lok Bhavan, the live stream will be from here. All our workers and our leaders can also watch from here. I am also inviting all other religious leaders to be a part of this event."

> **RCB match should have been held in Bengaluru. Injustice has been done to us**
>
> -DK Shivakumar, Chief Minister Designate

Amid the race for ministerial posts, former PWD minister and Yamakanamaradi MLA Satish Jarkiholi said discussions on social representation in the new government were expected to begin shortly, though he maintained that he had not sought any particular post.

"Those discussions have to happen and eventually reach a conclusion," Jarkiholi said at a press conference in the City.

Asked about efforts by supporters projecting him for a major role, including demands from sections of the OBC community, Jarkiholi said the party would take the final call. He also said that the party would rally behind Shivakumar.

Similarly, supporters of Patil have been pressing for a key position for the senior Lingayat leader, with demands ranging from the KPCC President's post to a Deputy Chief Minister position for the Veerashaiva-Lingayat community. Eshwara Khande's name has also been floated during such demands.

Outgoing Food Minister KH Muniyappa also reiterated his faith in the Congress High Command amid speculation over representation for leaders from his camp and possible opportunities for his daughter Roopa Shashidhar, who is an MLA. —*Agencies*

Farmers protesting Mekedatu dam stopped at TN border

BENGALURU, 31 MAY

At least 500 farmers protesting against the Mekedatu Balancing Reservoir were stopped near Hosur, on Sunday —*SCREENGRAB*

At least 500 Tamil Nadu farmers protesting the proposed Mekedatu dam on the Cauvery River were blocked near the Karnataka border on Sunday.

Led by Tamizhaga Cauvery Vivasayigal Sangam General Secretary PR Pandian, the farmers were marching from Hosur to Karnataka when they were blocked in the Krishnagiri district. They alleged that the proposed dam would affect the lakh of farmers in the Cauvery delta, especially given the lack of rainfall.

The farmers chanted slogans against the dam and demanded intervention from the Central government.

Pandian demanded that contempt of court proceedings be moved against Karnataka Chief Minister-elect DK Shivakumar for allegedly speaking against the Supreme Court verdict on the Mekedatu Dam. Shivakumar had earlier said that Tamil Nadu had "no right" to object to the dam.

Pandian alleged that Shivakumar was instigating division between Tamilians and Kannadigas. He said that the dam was "illegal" and said that if Bengaluru needs drinking water there was already an agreement between Tamil Nadu and Karnataka on the use of the Cauvery. He alleged that the dam would also adversely impact farmers in Karnataka as well. —*Agencies*

NO DEMAND, NO USE

Hundreds of 'bike taxis' lie discarded at Rajarajeshwari Nagar in Bengaluru on Sunday. Ride-hailing companies have been dumping their vehicles despite the Karnataka High Court revoking the ban on bike taxis in January 2026. The court mandated registering the bikes as transport vehicles. Though apps such as Rapido and Uber have million of users, the likely fall in demand could be attributed to frequent regulatory pushbacks —*MOHAMMED ASAD*

6 killed as auto gets crushed between SUV & parked lorry on B'luru-Hyd NH

An SUV rammed an auto transporting agricultural labourers on the Bengaluru–Hyderabad Highway, pushing it into a lorry, on Sunday —*SALAR*

CHIKKABALLAPUR, 31 MAY

Six people, including an auto-rickshaw driver, were killed and five women injured after an SUV allegedly hit an auto-rickshaw from behind, forcing it into a stationary lorry on the Bengaluru–Hyderabad National Highway near Sunkalamma Temple at Bagepalli on Sunday afternoon.

The accident occurred around 3pm. The deceased were identified as auto driver Anjinappa, 35; and passengers Umadevi, 55; Vijaya, 40; Lakshmamma, 50; and Sarojamma, 65. All four women were agricultural labourers from Bagepalli town, said Chikkaballapur Superintendent of Police Kushal Chousky.

- Nine women labourers and the driver were travelling in the auto at the time. The severity of the accident left the highway strewn with blood, and led to trafic congestion

Nine women labourers and the driver were travelling in the auto at the time. The injured—identified as Gangadevi, Lakshmidevi, Rathnamma, Arunamma and Rajamma—were admitted to a hospital in Chikkaballapur and are undergoing treatment.

According to police, the victims were returning home after work at a nearby farm. As the auto approached Bagepalli, the SUV travelling towards Hyderabad allegedly crashed into it from behind.

The impact pushed the auto into a parked lorry, trapping it between the two vehicles. Police have registered a case and launched an investigation. —*Salar News*

Nitin to chair BJP meet ahead of RS polls

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

BJP National President Nitin Nabin will chair a crucial meeting of the party's top office bearers at the BJP headquarters on 1 June to review preparations for programmes marking 12 years of the Narendra Modi-led government at the Centre and the upcoming Rajya Sabha elections.

The Election Commission had earlier this month announced the schedule for the biennial elections to 24 Rajya Sabha seats from ten States on 18 June.

In Karnataka four seats will become vacant, including those of Congress' Mallikarjun Kharge and JD(S)' HD Deve Gowda, who are set to retire

This meeting carries extra weight as it may be the last time many current office bearers sit together in this format.

As per organisational rules, the BJP National President is set to roll out a new team in June. —*ANI*

CISF to cover NATGRID B'luru campus amid security threat

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

The NATGRID campus in Bengaluru will now be protected by the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) —*PTI*

The Centre has sanctioned deployment of Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) personnel for securing the NATGRID (national intelligence grid) campus in Yelahanka in Bengaluru. The force, under the MHA, provides armed security cover to critical and sensitive installations in both the government and private domain.

A spokesperson for the paramilitary force said on Sunday that the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has sanctioned a total of 76 posts for the task.

The NATGRID is a critical national security infrastructure that aggregates data from multiple intelligence and law enforcement databases to support counter-terrorism operations, the CISF spokesperson said.

Its headquarters in Delhi is already secured by the CISF to provide security against terrorist attacks and sabotage.

In a similar development last week, the CISF took over security of the Sushma Swaraj Bhawan located in Delhi's Chanakyapuri area with the deployment of 90 personnel. The Bhawan, a cultural centre under the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) that holds events for forging India's connect with its diaspora apart from similar initiatives, was earlier known as the 'Pravasi Bharatiya Kendra.' —*PTI*

BLACKMAILED WOMAN MURDERS SISTER-IN-LAW TO STEAL JEWELLERY

CHIKKABALLAPUR, 31 MAY

Chikkaballapur police have solved the murder of a 23-year-old woman and arrested her sister-in-law and a relative for allegedly conspiring to kill her and stage the crime as a robbery.

The accused are Bhavya and Lohith Kumar. Bhavya was allegedly being blackmailed by Lohith of Hoskote, who possessed private videos of her and had already extorted about Rs 6 lakh, said Superintendent of Police Kushal Chousky.

As his demands increased, Bhavya allegedly planned to rob the gold ornaments of her sister-in-law, Pushpalatha. On 28 May, after Pushpalatha's husband Bharath, Bhavya's twin brother, left on a trip, Bhavya allegedly alerted Lohith, who entered the house and smothered Pushpalatha with a pillow. He then inflicted a throat wound and fled with the jewellery. Bhavya initially claimed miscreants had entered the house and attacked them, but police and autopsy findings contradicted her account, leading to a confession.—*Salar News*

ECO SENSITIVE ZONE

Thousands of fish found dead in Shishila

BELTANGADY, 31 MAY

Thousands of fish have been seen floating on the waters close to the Shishileshwara Temple, with a chemical leak suspected —*x*

Thousands of fish were found dead near the vented dam at Shishila in Dakshina Kannada district, close to the Shishileshwara Temple, causing alarm among devotees and conservationists. The discovery of a copper sulphate packet near the site has fuelled suspicions of poisoning.

Locals discovered thousands of fish floating in the water and washed ashore in the protected Matsyatirtha zone on Saturday. Locals suspect that toxic chemicals were deliberately released into the waterbody on Friday night, leading to the mass fish kill.

Notably, the scene, extending about two kilometres around the temple's sacred fish habitat, is a designated conservation zone where fishing is strictly prohibited. Causing Residents and devotees to demand an immediate inspection by the authorities, scientific testing of water samples, and stringent action against those responsible for the incident.

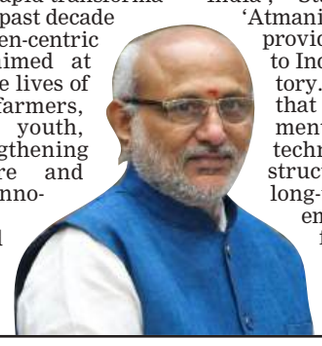
The Shishileshwara Temple in Belthangady taluk is famous for the 'Devara Meenu' (sacred fish), where devotees in large numbers throng to offer prayers and feed the fish.

"Locals are concerned that mixing toxic substances like copper sulfate into the water not only harms the fish but also affects the entire aquatic ecosystem, water quality, and environmental balance," Matsya Hitarakshana Vedike President Jayaram Nellithaya said.

Vedike has urged the police, fisheries department, and temple administration to conduct a scientific investigation and take strict legal action against the culprits, citing the use of toxic chemicals to kill fish, disregarding legal and environmental regulations. —*Agencies*

Inclusivity vital for Viksit Bharat: Radhakrishnan

MANGALURU, 31 MAY



Vice President C P Radhakrishnan on Sunday said inclusive development would be central to India's journey towards becoming a developed nation by 2047.

Addressing a gathering at the inauguration of the Siri Mathashree Industrial Park, Radhakrishnan said India had witnessed a rapid transformation over the past decade through citizen-centric initiatives aimed at improving the lives of the poor, farmers, women and youth, while strengthening infrastructure and promoting innovation.

He added that the aspirations and energy of the country's youth would be crucial to achieving the goal of a developed India by the centenary of Independence. He called upon students and entrepreneurs to contribute to innovation, skill development and nation-building efforts.

Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot, who also addressed the event, said flagship programmes such as 'Make in India', 'Startup India' and 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' had provided fresh direction to India's growth trajectory. Gehlot noted that that sustained investments in education, technology and infrastructure were aiding long-term growth. He emphasised the need for their benefits to reach marginalised communities. —*PTI*

12 booked for land dispute that killed 6

VIJAYAPURA, 31 MAY

Police have named 12 accused in connection with the murder of six people, including four members of a family, in a violent land dispute in Vijayapura district.

According to an FIR registered at Chadachan police station, the complaint was filed by farmer and town panchayat member Chaitannya Kumar Nirale. He alleged that a long-running dispute over agricultural land purchased by his family in Govindapur led to the attack.

The land was bought from Khyama Ninga Teli alias Ganiger after assurances that there were no objections. However, disputes resurfaced when the family began cultivating the property. Police said armed men arrived on motorcycles while family members were clearing the land and attacked them. —*PTI*

TRUMP'S DAUGHTER IN JAIPUR

Tiffany Trump, daughter of US President Donald Trump, arrived in Rajasthan's Jaisalmer on Sunday with her husband Michael Boulos for a private visit —PTI

Assam set to expand Cabinet on 5 June

GUWAHATI, 31 MAY

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced that his ministry will be expanded with new ministers sworn in on 5 June. Sarma, re sworn in on 12 May by Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, shared this. Four ministers had already taken oath: BJP's Ajanta Neog and Rameswar Teli, AGP's Atul Bora, and BPF's Charan Boro. Sarma said, "The Council of Ministers of the Government of Assam will be expanded on 5 June, 2026," without revealing the number or names of new ministers. Neog, Bora, and Boro retained their roles; Teli, a former Union minister, was inducted for the first time. —PTI

TVK, DMK fume over saffronisation of Thiruvalluvar

CHENNAI, 31 MAY

Political parties, including ruling TVK and Opposition DMK, condemned the depiction of Tamil poet-philosopher Thiruvalluvar in saffron robes at Lok Bhavan during the 'Vaikasi Anusham' celebrations on May 30. The traditional image portrays him in white attire.Tamil Nadu Health Minister Arunraaj said the portrayal was "fundamentally wrong", adding that Thiruvalluvar's Tirukkural represents a universal moral code. DMK leader Udhayanidhi Stalin criticised the iconography and alleged government silence, also questioning the shift from the traditional January Thiruvalluvar Day observance.CPI(M) state secretary P Shanmugam termed it an insult and urged the Governor to apologise, while CPI's M Veerapandian called for respect for cultural traditions. MDMK leader Vaiko described the saffron depiction as "slyness" and questioned the move.—PTI

—PTI

BJP supports Arunachal CM amid CBI probe

ITANAGAR, 31 MAY

Arunachal Pradesh BJP on Sunday backed Chief Minister Pema Khandu amid speculation over his political future following a Supreme Court-ordered CBI inquiry, asserting there is no question of leadership change during the investigation. The SC in April ordered a CBI inquiry into charges that contracts worth Rs 1,270 crore, awarded in 2015 to 2025, were linked to Khandu's family. Addressing reporters, BJP president Kaling Moyong said the party would respect the judicial process and not decide until the investigation concludes. BJP leaders reiterated unity, warning against misinformation, with general secretary Tadar Niglar and Junty Singpho expressing confidence in the judiciary and Khandu. The BJYM lodged a complaint over false reports about Khandu's resignation. —PTI

Victim of state-sponsored terrorism: Abhishek

4 held as TMC alleges BJP plot; BJP denies involvement

KOLKATA, 31 MAY

TMC National General Secretary Abhishek Banerjee on Sunday alleged he was a victim of "state-sponsored terrorism" a day after being attacked with stones and eggs during a visit to Sonarpur in South 24 Parganas district, where police have now arrested four people in connection with the incident.

Banerjee, allegedly targeted by a mob on Saturday while visiting the home of a post-poll violence victim (**in pic**), claimed BJP activists tried to kill him.

Police said four people were arrested overnight based on video footage collected from the area, and a suo motu case has been registered as neither Banerjee nor TMC had filed a formal complaint till Sunday. The arrested individuals are likely to be produced before a court in Baruipur.

Meanwhile, Abhishek thanked Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, SP Chief Akhilesh Yadav and Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren for their support, and said the attack reflected a broader attempt to silence Opposition voices.

Banerjee said the violence reflected the BJP's political culture, alleging that opponents are targeted while supporters are rewarded. He also claimed security lapses and withdrawal of protection contributed to the incident, calling it a "conscious abdication of responsibility".

Scores of people reportedly hurled stones, eggs and abused the MP. He later received medical attention at a private hospital but was discharged after preliminary treatment amid conflicting medical assessments over the severity of his injuries. TMC Chief Mamata Banerjee questioned security arrangements and hospital handling, alleging political pressure on medical authorities. She said doctors had identified multiple blunt injuries and ordered scans, while also suggesting that Abhishek could have suffered fatal injuries without protective gear.

TMC also alleged the attack was "planned and BJP-sponsored", sharing photographs and questioning the presence of party functionaries at the site BJP denied involvement, with West Bengal president Samik Bhattacharya calling the incident unacceptable but attributing it to local anger. —PTI

> We never support the kind of incident that happened with Abhishek Banerjee. What happened yesterday was also a manifestation of public wrath
>
> -Agnimitra Paul, West Bengal minister

TMC meeting called off after poor attendance

A scheduled meeting of newly elected Trinamool Congress MLAs, to be chaired by party supremo Mamata Banerjee, was called off on Sunday after nearly three-fourths of the 80 legislators failed to attend, party sources said.

TMC spokesperson Kunal Ghosh cited the "emergent ground situation" following attacks on Abhishek Banerjee and Kalyan Banerjee. Around 20 MLAs present held informal talks.

The party announced block and ward-level protest rallies on 1 June and a day-long sit-in by Mamata Banerjee in central Kolkata on June 2 against post-poll violence and evictions. —PTI

AFTER ABHISHEK, TMC'S KALYAN BANERJEE 'MOBBED'

KOLKATA, 31 MAY

TMC MP Kalyan Banerjee on Sunday alleged he sustained head injuries after being mobbed by BJP workers outside a police station in West Bengal's Hooghly district.

The incident took place when he visited Chanditala police station to submit a memorandum against the arrest of TMC workers after the Assembly elections. Banerjee alleged he was struck on the head and seen bleeding, claiming, "All this happened in front of the police."

Tension prevailed as a group waved black flags, shouted "thief", and protested against the TMC delegation. The MP later staged a dharna, accusing police inaction and alleging "BJP-sponsored attacks". He was seen with a bandage on his forehead after the incident. TMC Chief Mamata Banerjee visited his residence and accused the BJP of "murdering democracy", alleging similar attacks on Abhishek Banerjee a day earlier. —PTI

CHANGE OF GUARD

Operational readiness is new Navy Chief's priority

New Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Krishna Swaminathan with his outgoing counterpart Dinesh Kumar Tripathi in New Delhi —PTI

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

Admiral Krishna Swaminathan assumed charge as India's new Chief of Naval Staff on Sunday amid a fast evolving regional maritime security scenario.

He succeeds Admiral Dinesh Kumar Tripathi, who retired. Admiral Swaminathan was serving as the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Western Naval Command.

The new Navy chief described the regional security environment as "challenging, complex, and unpredictable" and asserted that maintaining peak operational readiness will be his priority.

"The Indian Navy is actively deployed in a regional security environment that is challenging, complex, unpredictable and uncertain," he told reporters.

Admiral Swaminathan said the Indian Navy is well set on a course of modernisation.

"It shall be my endeavour to sustain the growth momentum of the Navy, consolidate all programs, scale up where required, and sharpen our operational capabilities," he said.

"I will devote every single day of my life to making the Navy a better, stronger, and sharper," he added.

Admiral Swaminathan said the Navy is deeply committed to 'Atmanirbharata' and indigenisation. He also praised Admiral Tripathi as one of the "finest" military professionals globally.

Admiral Swaminathan was commissioned into the Indian Navy on 1 July 1987 and is a specialist in communication and electronic warfare.

He is an alumnus of NDA, Khadakvasla; the Joint Services Command and Staff College, Shrivenham, UK; the College of Naval Warfare, Karanja; and the US Naval War College, Newport. —PTI

- Admiral Swaminathan was commissioned into the Indian Navy on 1 July 1987 and is a specialist in communication and electronic warfare.

Rahul talks CBSE OSM row with 'Soros agent' students

Lok Sabha Opposition Leader Rahul Gandhi during an interaction with CBSE board students —PTI

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday targeted the Centre over the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) On-Screen Marking (OSM) row.

He shared a video on X of talk with a students, describing it as a "revealing chat with my fellow 'anti-national Soros agents,' and called them brave young Indians who asked the Modi government simple questions but received "insults instead of answers."

Gandhi also joked about how students who raised concerns were labelled "Pakistanis" and "deep state agents" after raising what he called legitimate concerns and issues.

Several CBSE Class 12 students had flagged mix-up cases after accessing copies uploaded on the portal but the answer sheets did not belong to them. CBSE later reached out to them and shared the correct answer sheets.

Coempt, the OSM company for the CBSE exam, has come under attack from Gandhi, who alleged that the firm was already controversial under its old name, Globarena.

The Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha has demanded an independent judicial probe, as well as a Special Investigation Team inquiry. He asked why a firm that had a murky past in Telangana handed the contract to the board. —PTI

ISI planned Mumbai attacks to avenge mosque razing

MUMBAI, 31 MAY

An ISI-underworld terror module, busted by Delhi Police, planned to attack police and security forces in Mumbai to avenge the demolition of an illegal mosque in the Garib Nagar area of Bandra, officials said.

The Delhi Police said on Saturday that they had arrested eight suspected operatives, including a Nepali, allegedly planning attacks on vital installations in Delhi.

The suspects had conducted a recce of the Garib Nagar demolition drive and had sent videos of the police to their handlers in Pakistan, police said.

Police deployed during the demolition in Garib Nagar and Hindus were among the intended targets, he said.

The conspiracy was allegedly planned by the ISI, gangster Shahzad Bhatti, Yawar Khan, and underworld operative Munna Jhingada, a close aide of Chhota Shakeel, he said.

Delhi Special Cell arrested Sajid Mehboob Shaikh alias Arbaaz Khan from Mumbai and Tauqeer Rizwan Shaikh from Mumbra in Thane on 27 May, he said. The investigation showed that the duo had surveyed a crowded bridge outside Dadar railway station.

Phones were seized. The name of Jhingada cropped up as a conspirator. Believed to be operating from Karachi.

Pakistan's ISI has asked its Over Ground Workers in J&K to infiltrate national political parties, officials said on Sunday. —PTI

THREE HELD FOR TRYING TO GO TO POK

SRINAGAR/JAMMU, 31 MAY

The Army apprehended three people, who were trying to cross the LoC into PoK, officials said on Sunday. The three Sopore in Baramulla district natives were trying to enter PoK from the Hathlanga-Nambla axis on Saturday. The trio included a former territorial army jawan,. The same army unit apprehended a PoK resident who had crossed LoC into Kashmir. Zeeshan claimed he crossed to meet his girlfriend. —PTI

Pak beams tele signals to aid terror networks

SRINAGAR/JAMMU, 31 MAY

Pakistan is violating international telecommunication norms by beaming superfluous cellular signals into J&K for covert communication to terrorists in the UT, with focus on the Jammu region, officials said on Sunday.

Infiltration patterns, particularly in the south of the Pir Panjal range, indicate a significant surge in telecom towers erected along the LoC in PoK whose signals reach various Jammu jails where terrorists are lodged.

While the mountains of Kashmir Valleyblock most of these signals, the flat topography of Jammu allows the frequencies to penetrate deep into Indian territory. —PTI

134TH EPISODE

PM talks heat, mangoes, sport and more in 'Mann ki Baat'

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in the 134th episode of his monthly radio programme Mann Ki Baat on Sunday, urged citizens to stay safe amid rising temperatures, while highlighting India's mango diversity, grassroots environmental efforts, sporting achievements and cultural heritage.

With heatwaves affecting several parts of the country, the Prime Minister advised people to remain hydrated and follow government-issued safety guidelines. "Don't forget the guidelines issued by various government departments," he said.

Modi spoke about India's rich variety of mangoes, describing the fruit as a symbol of regional diversity, noting that every part of the country has its own distinct variety and aroma.

He also interacted with sprinters Gurindervir Singh and Animesh Kujur, who recently broke the national men's 100-metre record three times in two days at the National Senior Athletics Federation Competition, praising their achievements.

The Prime Minister highlighted the return of 24 Chola-era copper plates from the Netherlands, calling them evidence of the maritime strength of the Chola Empire.

He also featured grassroots initiatives, including educator Girija Amma from Nagercoil, whose students raised Rs 40 lakh for soldiers, and a dolphin rescue ambulance under the Namami Gange programme that saved a Gangetic dolphin in a 13-hour operation in Uttar Pradesh.

Meanwhile, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi criticised the Prime Minister, alleging that while Modi spoke about mangoes, he remained silent on alleged CBSE On-Screen Marking irregularities affecting 18.5 lakh students, calling the silence "complicity."

—*Salar News*

BJP wins three of four Himachal civic bodies

SHIMLA, 31 MAY

The BJP secured victories in Mandi, Dharamshala, and Solan municipal corporations, while Congress retained control of Palampur in local elections held on 17 May.

The BJP won 37 of 63 seats, Congress 23, with three Independents. BJP retained Mandi and gained control in Dharamshala and Solan, winning 12 and 10 seats respectively. Congress won 11 seats in Palampur. Polling averages were highest in Palampur at 68.97 per cent, lowest in Solan at 58.32 per cent.

BJP state president Rajiv Bindal said the results indicated the public's rejection of the Congress-led government, viewing these elections as a "public referendum" against its "anti-people policies"—*PTI*

Ahilyabai Holkar's 301st birth anniversary celebrated

SREEVALLI KRISHNA
INDORE, 31 MAY

The 301st birth anniversary of Rajmata Ahilyabai Holkar, widely revered for her administrative acumen and commitment to justice in the 18th century, was celebrated across India on Saturday.

Born on 31 May, 1725, the Maratha Malwa queen continues to be remembered for her governance and social welfare measures. Social, cultural and religious programmes were organised in her birthplace Chondi, as well as in Indore and parts of Maharashtra.

A large number of devotees and political leaders gathered from morning at Chondi in Ahilyanagar district, formerly Ahmednagar, to pay homage. In Indore, the former capital of the Holkar dynasty, the "Devi Ahilya Jayanti Parv" was marked in the Rajwada area, with a traditional palanquin procession and a grand ceremonial "Shobhayatra" scheduled for the evening.

Ahilyabai Holkar assumed administrative responsibilities in 1767 after the deaths of her husband Khanderao Holkar and father-in-law Malharrao Holkar. She went on to establish a period of stability, economic growth and effective governance in the Malwa region.

She is credited with promoting widows' rights, encouraging education, and strengthening public welfare systems. Her reign also saw large-scale restoration of pilgrimage sites and temples across India, including Kashi Vishwanath in Varanasi, Somnath in Gujarat, Kedarnath and Badrinath, along with construction of ghats, dharamshalas and wells.

Her capital at Maheshwar emerged as a centre of textile weaving, civic development and social welfare. To mark the occasion, lectures, blood donation camps and student support programmes were organised across India.

—ANI

Stray dog bites nearly 60 in MP's Shivpuri, captured

SHIVPURI, 31 MAY

A stray dog went on a biting spree across Shivpuri city in MP, injuring nearly 60 people, including a two-year-old girl with severe facial wounds. Victims, mainly women and children, were rushed to hospitals, prompting an emergency capture operation. Eyewitnesses said the black stray targeted pedestrians in several neighbourhoods, with the worst attack in Laxmibai Colony. The girl was rescued after suffering critical injuries. Health officials confirmed victims received anti-rabies vaccines. Shivpuri Municipal Council Chief Officer Ishank Dhakad said the animal was successfully captured. Surveillance has been intensified, and officials urged citizens to report suspicious animals. The incident follows the Supreme Court allowing euthanasia for rabid stray dogs. —*PTI*

—ANI

Para-athlete held for killing athlete in Ghaziabad

GHAZIABAD, 31 MAY

A para-athlete has been arrested for allegedly shooting dead national-level para-athlete Chirag Tyagi, suspected to be revenge for a document verification dispute. The 24-year-old from Basantpur Sethli village was found dead near Sai Upvan. Tyagi had recently returned from Pune and last spoke to his family on Saturday morning. Police said the body showed signs of gunshot wounds. Yash Khatik, a fellow para-athlete and former trainee, was detained after police found evidence linking him to the said crime. Khatik reportedly confessed to shooting Tyagi with a pistol, and authorities recovered the weapon and arrested him. —*PTI*

Five drown in Tungabhadra in bid to save girl

MANTRALAYAM, 31 MAY

As many as five people drowned attempting to rescue a minor girl who slipped into the Tungabhadra River. The girl was washing her feet when she was swept away by the current around 4.30pm. Despite the rescue attempt, five individuals from neighbouring villages lost their lives, while the girl was saved. Police confirmed the incident and launched a search with the State Disaster Management Force (SDRF) to retrieve the bodies. A police official stated, "Five people who jumped into the river in an attempt to save the girl drowned, though the girl was saved." Efforts to recover the victims' bodies are on. —*PTI*

Man falls into open lift shaft, crushed to death

ALIGARH, 31 MAY

Hari Om Sharma, a 58-year-old property dealer, died after falling into an open lift shaft at Rasik Apartments. He was visiting a client when, according to witnesses, he attempted to enter the lift after the door opened but was unaware it was still descending. He stepped into thin air and fell into the shaft, with the lift descending moments later, crushing him. Senior officials, including Additional City Magistrate Digvijay, arrived to assess the scene. A two-member enquiry committee, with the Aligarh Development Authority secretary, has been formed to investigate. The body has been sent for autopsy. —*PTI*

POCSO applies if commercial sex victim is minor: SC

Consent of child victim irrelevant, says SC

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

The Supreme Court held that cases involving the trafficking of children for Commercial Sexual Exploitation (CSE) can attract charges under the POCSO Act, along with the BNS and the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act.

Justices JB Pardiwala and R Mahadevan issued a slew of directions on Friday to mitigate the concerns of sex workers, while clarifying on the legal framework for the prosecution of perpetrators and the rehabilitation of victims.

It said the consent of an adult victim to the intended exploitation is irrelevant if any of the listed "means," like the use of threat, force, other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power, abuse of a position of vulnerability, or the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to gain the consent of a person, are used.

"The consent of a child victim of trafficking is irrelevant. Lack of consent is not an element of the crime in the trafficking in persons. Thus, the focus should be firmly on the actions and intentions of the perpetrators, and once the elements of the crime of trafficking, including the use of one of the identified means (coercion, deception, etc.), are proven, any defence or allegation that the victim 'consented' should be deemed irrelevant," it said.

The bench said a person's awareness that they are being employed in the sex industry does not exclude them from being considered a victim of trafficking, as they may have been deceived about work conditions.

The SC said Article 23 of the Constitution prohibits trafficking in human beings, beggars, and all other forms of forced labour, and its ambit is unlimited. It strikes at human trafficking in whatever form and is enforceable not only against the State but against any individuals engaged in such practices. — *PTI*

MEDICAL EDUCATION

NMC for restoring 10-year limit for completing MBBS

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

The National Medical Commission (NMC) has proposed amending the Graduate Medical Education Regulations (GMER), 2023, to allow MBBS students up to 10 years to complete their course, including the compulsory rotatory medical internship, effectively restoring the earlier time limit that was reduced in 2023.

In a draft amendment uploaded on its website, the commission invited suggestions from stakeholders and the public within 30 days.

As per the proposed changes, no student will be allowed more than four attempts to clear the first professional MBBS examination (First Year MBBS), a provision that remains unchanged. However, students would be allowed to continue the undergraduate medical course for up to 10 years from the date of admission, including the internship period.

This is in alignment with the National Medical Commission's Foreign Medical Graduate Licentiate (FMGL) regulations, 2021.

"Under no circumstances will a student be allowed more than four attempts for the first year (First Professional MBBS) and no student shall be allowed to continue the undergraduate medical course after 10 years from the date of joining the MBBS course (including continuous rotatory medical internship)," the draft amendment issued on 18 May said.

In June 2023, the National Medical Commissionreduced the maximum duration for completing MBBS from 10 years to nine years.

The proposed relaxation is expected to benefit students who face academic setbacks, health issues, personal emergencies, or other unforeseen circumstances during the course, providing them greater flexibility to complete their medical education.

The amendment will be finalised after considering the feedback received from the public, medical educators, medical professionals and medical students about the draft regulations, the official said. — *PTI*

- No student will be allowed more than four attempts to clear the first professional MBBS examination (First Year MBBS). However, students would be allowed to continue the undergraduate medical course for up to 10 years from the date of admission, including the internship period

Naga govt trying to 'dilute' deal: ENPO

KOHIMA, 31 MAY

Neiphiu Rio —*X/ NEIPHIU RIO*

The Eastern Nagaland Peoples' Organisation (ENPO) has accused the Nagaland government of attempting to "dilute the core provisions" of the Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) on the Frontier Nagaland Territorial Authority (FNTA), and alleged that the state has taken a 'U-turn' on commitments made during the tripartite negotiation process.

The ENPO, in a statement on Saturday, expressed concern over attempts to alter key provisions of the 5 February 2026 MoA, which provides for the creation of the FNTA as a self-governing territorial authority with legislative, executive and financial autonomy within Nagaland.

The organisation said these provisions form the very foundation of the agreement and warned that any modification would amount to dismantling the MoA.

It urged the state government to pass the FNTA Bill in the Nagaland Assembly without diluting any provision of the signed MoA, maintaining that the arrangement was intended to address the developmental and governance concerns of eastern Nagaland.

The ENPO alleged that the state government was now distancing itself from positions it had earlier endorsed during consultations on the proposed arrangement.

It claimed that in its comments on the Memorandum of Settlement (MoS) submitted by the Ministry of Home Affairs in 2023, the state had agreed in principle to grant legislative, executive and financial autonomy to the proposed authority.

The organisation urged the state government to honour the agreement in both letter and spirit and facilitate its smooth implementation for the peace, development and welfare of eastern Nagaland.

Meanwhile, the ENPO convened its central executive council (CEC) meeting at Tuensang on 3 June to deliberate on the matter.

Before the central executive council meeting, a consultative meeting will be held on 2 June with political leaders and workers of both national and regional parties from eastern Nagaland, along with presidents and secretaries of all six district units. — *PTI*

Ultras burn 5 houses in Manipur, none injured

IMPHAL, 31 MAY

Five kutcha houses were burnt down by suspected militants in Manipur's Kangpokpi district, police said on Sunday.

The incident took place at Kharam Vaiphei, a Kuki-Zo village, on Saturday. No injuries were reported.

Locals claimed that armed persons from another tribe attacked the village and set fire to the houses.

Kuki Inpi Manipur (KIM), the apex body of Kuki tribes in the state, condemned the incident and called upon authorities to conduct a fair investigation, identify those responsible and take action.

The organisation also called for measures to prevent escalation and ensure the safety of civilians.

Police also dismissed "statements circulated on social media," which allegedly targeted the district SP.

Police said the allegations against the officer were "baseless," "grossly false" and "do not arise from the facts of the incident."

It also warned of legal action against those spreading disinformation.

- Kuki Inpi Manipur (KIM), the apex body of Kuki tribes, condemned the incident and called upon the authorities to conduct a fair probe, identify those responsible and take action. It also called for steps to prevent escalation of violence

COBRA UNITS

The Centre has ordered deployment of two battalions of the CRPF's jungle warfare unit CoBRA in Manipur, official sources said on Sunday.

Officials said the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has approved a proposal of the CRPF to deploy two CoBRA battalions in Manipur, battalion no 207 based in West Bengal and 210 located in Assam, for duties. — *PTI*

HORROR IN SAKET

Delhi building collapse kills 6; 2 MCD engineers suspended

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

The NDRF and then police conduct rescue operations after a building collapsed on Saturday near the Saket Metro station in New Delhi—*PTI*

Two MCD engineers have been suspended in connection with the collapse of a three-storey commercial building near Saket Metro station that killed six people, officials said on Sunday.

The Deputy Commissioner of MCD's South Zone, Assistant Engineer (Building) Sudesh Singh Chouhan and Junior Engineer (Building) Aman Jain were suspended on Saturday for lapses in checking the collapsed building in Saidulajab.

The suspensions came a day after the three-storey commercial building near Saket Metro station collapsed, triggering a massive rescue operation.

The death toll in the incident rose to four on Sunday, while several others were rescued from the debris and shifted to hospital.

The building on Western Marg housed a coaching institute, cafes and offices. Construction was underway on the upper floor at the time of the collapse. DCP (South) Anant Mittal said the structure was reduced to rubble, with debris falling on an adjoining tin-shed canteen frequented by NEET students.

The exact cause of the crash has not been ascertained.

Chief Minister Rekha Gupta visited the site of the building collapse in Saket on Sunday, as the government ordered a magisterial inquiry and registered a criminal case.

The FIR has been lodged at Mehrauli PS, while the inquiry will be conducted under the supervision of the South District Magistrate. — *PTI*

Onion farmers seek Rs 10K crore revival package

NASHIK, 31 MAY

The Maharashtra State Onion Growers Farmers Association urged the Centre to announce a Rs 10,000 crore revival package as onion farmers in the state are experiencing a severe financial crisis. The association has asked that the assistance be transferred directly into farmers' bank accounts.

Bharat Dighole, founder-president of the Association, said in a statement that creation of an export promotion fund, a stable national export policy, and financial protection for farmers when prices collapse are important.

It further called for subsidised seeds and storage, interest-free loans, and a fund to support sales of the crop and its products to consumers, as well asfunds for setting up onion processing industries in multiple districts of the state.

Dighole added that the Centre's export bans, duties and prices hit onion farmers hard.

Releasing buffer stock in the market through Central agencies at lower rates also caused losses, he said. — *PTI*

MAIN SUSPECT IN GHAZIABAD BOY'S MURDER KILLED IN ENCOUNTER

GHAZIABAD, 31 MAY

The main accused in the murder of a 17-year-old Class 11 student here died after getting injured in an encounter with the police on Sunday, police said

Asad, a resident of Khoda area, was wanted in connection with the stabbing of Surya Chauhan, who died on Friday while undergoing treatment.

DCP (City) Jaiswal said that Asad was injured during an encounter with a police team in Khoda. He was taken to a hospital where he died.

Chauhan, a resident of Navneet Vihar Colony in Khoda, was stabbed during an altercation on 28 May and was initially admitted to a local hospital and then referred to a private hospital in Noida, where he died.

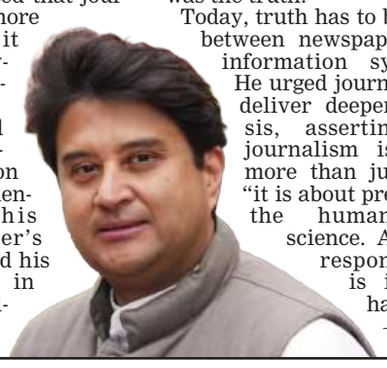
Based on a complaint lodged by the victim's family, police registered a case against five persons.

Earlier, police had said the suspects and the victim were friends and that a dispute over riding a motorcycle escalated into an argument and Chauhan was stabbed.

The victim's family, however, alleged that Chauhan had been lured to a meeting spot, and was attacked by men armed with knives. — *PTI*

Journalism faces challenge from AI, deepfake: Scindia

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY



Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia stated that journalism today faces unique challenges in the age of artificial intelligence and deepfake technology, with the greatest crisis being that of credibility. Speaking at an event marking 200 years of Hindi journalism, he noted that during the colonial era, press faced censorship and resource scarcity, but today's issues are different. He emphasised that journalism is about more than data; it involves preserving human conscience.

Scindia paid tribute to his family's contribution to journalism, mentioning his great-grandfather's 'Jayaji Pratap' and his family's efforts in Gwalior, including transforming an old printing press into a museum. The two-day seminar, hosted by IGNCA and Madhavrao Sapre Memorial, commemorates the first Hindi newspaper, 'Udanta Martand', published in 1826.

He released a stamp and volume celebrating the bicentenary. He warned that today's challenges include fake narratives, misinformation, and manipulated videos. He said, "Back then, it was said that what one saw with one's eyes, was the truth.

Today, truth has to be found between newspapers and information systems."

He urged journalists to deliver deeper analysis, asserting that journalism is about more than just data; "it is about preserving the human conscience. And that responsibility is in your hands." —*PTI*

MOVE TO CHECK EXTORTION

TN private schools must display tuition fees on notice boards

CHENNAI, 31 MAY

The Tamil Nadu government has directed officials to make it mandatory for all private schools to display on their notice boards details of tuition fees. The fees have been fixed by the government.

The School Education Department's move came in response to complaints that many private schools were collecting huge amounts beyond the government fixed fees.

Pointing out that all government and private schools will reopen on 4 June, a senior official from the department said on Sunday that if any private school charges more fees than the nominated amount, its recognition will be cancelled.

Stating that around 13,000 recognised private schools were functioning in Tamil Nadu, the official said schools have been strictly told to stop collecting any "hidden" admission fees from parents.

"This regulation is reinforced by the Tamil Nadu Schools (Regulation of Collection of Fee) Amendment Act, and under this act, a committee, comprising higher officials and educationists, determines standard fees," he added.

The official also said parents can lodge a complaint if they find any schools collecting exorbitant fees against government norms. — *PTI*

Dust storm cools down Jaisalmer, provides relief from heat

JAIPUR, 31 MAY

A dust storm swept parts of Rajasthan's Jaisalmer district for the second day on Sunday evening, leading to a drop in temperature and providing relief from the heat, officials said.

A thick cloud of dust was seen rising on the horizon before moving towards inhabited areas, reducing visibility and intensifying winds.

Sultana and Mohangarh witnessed strong winds and gusty conditions, resulting in a noticeable dip in temperature and easing the heatwave. There were no immediate reports of any major damage to property, transport and communications infrastructure or casualties.

On 30 May, a massive dust storm barrelled through Rajasthan, disrupting normal life in the districts of Sri Ganganagar, Hanumangarh, Bikaner and Churu. —*PTI*

PROJECT DEMOLITION

A train passes by as authorities carry out a demolition drive to remove encroachments along a road, at Shalimar Bagh area, in New Delhi, on Sunday. 143 illegal structures will be razed after the Supreme Court upheld orders permitting the clearance of encroachments from land earmarked for the road widening. The apex court's order upheld an earlier Delhi High Court ruling that had rejected pleas seeking to halt the demolition and declare the decades-old land acquisition proceedings invalid —*PTI*

Over 1 lakh schools lack girls' toilets: NITI Aayog

Nearly one lakh schools across India still do not have functional toilets for girls, exposing a major gap in basic infrastructure that continues to affect attendance, retention and dignity of students, according to a new National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog report.

Titled 'School Education System in India: Temporal Analysis and Policy Roadmap for Quality Enhancement', the report analyses the progress of school education between 2014-2015 and 2024-2025. It says that 98,592 schools lacked functional girls' toilets in 2024-25, while 61,540 schools had no usable toilets at all.

The findings come despite a sharp rise in toilet coverage over the past decade. India currently has 14.71 lakh schools serving nearly 24.69 crore students, according to UDISE+ 2024-25 data cited in the report. The share of schools with functional girls' toilets increased from 85.17 per cent in 2014-15 to 94 per cent in 2024-25, while schools with boys' toilets rose from roughly 80 per cent in 2014-15 to 92.4 per cent in 2024-25.

NITI Aayog said the expansion reflected sustained investments on gender-responsive infrastructure under schemes such as the Swachh Vidyalaya Abhiyan and Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan under the Centre's Ministry of Education. Yet, the report warned, large gaps persisted in several states, especially in remote and difficult geographies.

To illustrate this, the report pointed out that while in 2024-25, functional girls' toilets are available universally in Andaman and Nicobar, Lakshadweep, Chandigarh and Delhi, and nearly ubiquitously in Goa, Puducherry, Haryana and West Bengal. However, Meghalaya (68.7 per cent), Arunachal Pradesh (73.7), Manipur (74.5), Tripura (75.4), and Mizoram (79.1) report much lower levels of coverage.

"Universal provision of safe and functional toilets for girls remains essential not only for health and dignity but also for improving attendance, retention, and transition rates, particularly at the upper primary and secondary levels," the report said.

The report noted that gender-sensitive infrastructure such as separate toilets and safe transport systems remained essential for keeping girls in school, especially during the transition to secondary education — *AI*

The report linked poor sanitation directly to absenteeism and dropouts among adolescent girls. It said inadequate menstrual hygiene facilities — including toilets, disposal units, private changing areas and access to sanitary products — often forced girls to miss school during menstruation or leave education entirely at the secondary stage.

"These shortcomings also contribute to social discomfort, health issues and discourage regular attendance," the report noted.

The infrastructure crisis is not limited to girls. NITI Aayog said nearly one in 12 schools in India still lacked a functional toilet for boys, affecting hygiene and attendance, particularly in rural and underserved areas.

The report placed sanitation gaps within a broader picture of uneven school infrastructure across India. While electricity coverage in schools rose from 55.96 per cent in 2014-15 to 91.9 per cent in 2024-25, around 1.19 lakh schools still lacked electricity. Nearly 14,505 schools did not have functional drinking water facilities and close to 59,829 lacked handwashing facilities.

"These gaps translate to schools not being physically fit for children to continue, and hamper education and basic public health," the report said.

Children with disabilities face even steeper barriers. Only 33.4 per cent of schools had toilets designed for Children with Special Needs (CwSN) in 2024-25, though this was an improvement from 16.64 per cent in 2018-19. The report said the absence of barrier-free toilets silently discouraged attendance and affected participation, safety and dignity.

NITI Aayog also linked the lack of sanitation facilities to broader educational inequities. The report noted that gender-sensitive infrastructure such as separate toilets and safe transport systems remained essential for keeping girls in school, especially during the transition to secondary education.

To address the gaps, the policy think tank recommended a nationwide infrastructure audit using Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+), an educational management information system under the Department of School Education & Literacy, and Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping, to identify schools lacking electricity, water and toilets.

It further called for convergence between the education ministry and schemes such as the Jal Jeevan Mission, Swachh Bharat Mission and Rural Infrastructure Development Fund to accelerate repairs and maintenance.

The report said every secondary and senior secondary school should be equipped with gender-segregated toilets, menstrual hygiene management facilities, handwashing stations and reliable water access within two to five years. It also proposed quarterly monitoring of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) infrastructure, community-led maintenance systems and annual audits.

The report argued that infrastructure should no longer be treated as an auxiliary issue but as central to educational quality and equity.

"As India moves towards the goal of becoming Viksit Bharat by 2047, the quality and reach of its school education system will play a decisive role in shaping social and economic progress," it said. — *Salar News*

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

SALAR ساڈہ

WORLD NO TOBACCO DAY

New tobacco products luring children: Experts

Children are up to nine times more likely than adults to be attracted to new tobacco and nicotine products, making them the primary targets of industry marketing strategies, leading public health experts warned on World No Tobacco Day on Sunday.

The experts said the tobacco and nicotine industry is increasingly using flavours, sleek designs, digital promotion and other tactics to make its products appealing to young people, raising concerns about a new generation becoming addicted to nicotine.

The warning comes as the world marks this year's World No Tobacco Day under the theme, "Unmasking the Appeal: Countering Nicotine and Tobacco Addiction", which focuses on exposing the tactics and strategies used to make tobacco and nicotine products appear attractive, particularly to children.

Dr Shalini Singh, Director of ICMR-National Institute of Cancer Prevention and Research (NICPR), said tobacco and nicotine often focus their marketing efforts on children and young adults as most users start consuming such products during adolescence or early adulthood.

"That is why the marketing tactics are designed to create curiosity, experimentation and eventually addiction," she said on Sunday during a webinar organised by Tobacco Free India, a citizens' initiative.

She said the challenge today extends beyond traditional tobacco products and includes newer nicotine products that are often perceived as less harmful and risky than they actually are.

Former Chief of the National Cancer Institute in Delhi, Dr Alok Thakar, said tobacco continues to impose a heavy burden on India's health system.

"As oncologists, we witness the consequences of tobacco use every day. Many tobacco-related cancers are preventable, yet thousands of families continue to suffer because addiction often begins at a young age," he said.

In a separate development, the World Health Organisation (WHO) announced the World No Tobacco Day Award 2026 for the ICMR-National Institute of Cancer Prevention and Research (NICPR) in recognition of its contribution to tobacco control and cancer prevention. The award is among the highest recognitions conferred by the WHO in the field of tobacco control.

Dr Singh said, "It reinforces the importance of sustained efforts in research, awareness, policy support and public engagement. India has made important progress, but the tobacco and nicotine landscape continues to evolve and requires continued vigilance."

Dr Thakar cautioned that many people continue to underestimate the risks associated with smokeless tobacco products. "In India, a significant proportion of oral cancer cases are linked to products such as gutkha, khaini and similar forms of smokeless tobacco. The packaging may change and the marketing may evolve, but the health consequences remain serious," he said.

Former NCERT Director Professor JbS Rajput said the issue should be viewed not only as a health challenge but also as an educational and social concern.

"We cannot leave this battle to the health authorities alone. Schools, parents and communities have a critical role in helping children recognise manipulation, resist peer pressure and make informed choices," he said.

According to the WHO, at least 40 million children aged 13-15 years worldwide currently use at least one tobacco product. In contrast, over 15 million adolescents in the same age group already use e-cigarettes. In countries with available data, children are on average nine times more likely than adults to vape.

While India took a major step by banning e-cigarettes in 2019, experts noted that concerns remain regarding illegal access, online sales channels and social media content that may continue to expose young people to nicotine products and related promotional messages.

"The appeal is carefully constructed. Young people often see only the attractive side of the product and not the addiction and health consequences that follow," Dr Singh said.

Tobacco kills 1.35 million people in India every year. Studies have estimated the economic burden attributable to tobacco use at more than Rs. 1.77 lakh crore annually, reflecting healthcare costs as well as productivity losses.

Dr Thakar emphasised that prevention remains the most effective strategy for reducing the burden of tobacco-related diseases.

"The most successful cancer treatment is the cancer that never develops. Every child protected from tobacco addiction today represents a healthier future for India," he said. —*PTI*

Doctors warn that many people underestimate the risks associated with smokeless tobacco products —*PTI*

Vultures make a comeback due to captive-breeding, but need safe spaces

Vultures are making a comeback two decades after toxic veterinary drugs cleared India's skies of its ultimate scavengers. At least 700 birds bred in captivity and wild-release programmes are turning protected tiger reserves into their new safe havens.

Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) and state governments are leading the initiative for the critically endangered white-rumped, long-billed, and slender-billed vulture species. Experimental releases are ongoing across Haryana, West Bengal, Maharashtra, and Assam, BNHS Director Kishor Rithe said.

Monitoring through GPS and GSM transmitters showed encouraging survival and dispersal patterns, with a long-billed vulture released from Pench travelling 750 km to Nashik, Maharashtra, in 17 days.

Rithe, however, noted that long-term success would depend on the availability of safe food sources beyond protected areas, such as sanctuaries, national parks and conservation reserves.

"The breeding and release programme can succeed only when a safe environment is created for vultures beyond protected areas. Eliminating harmful NSAIDs and ensuring safe food sources remain critical for the recovery of these species," he said.

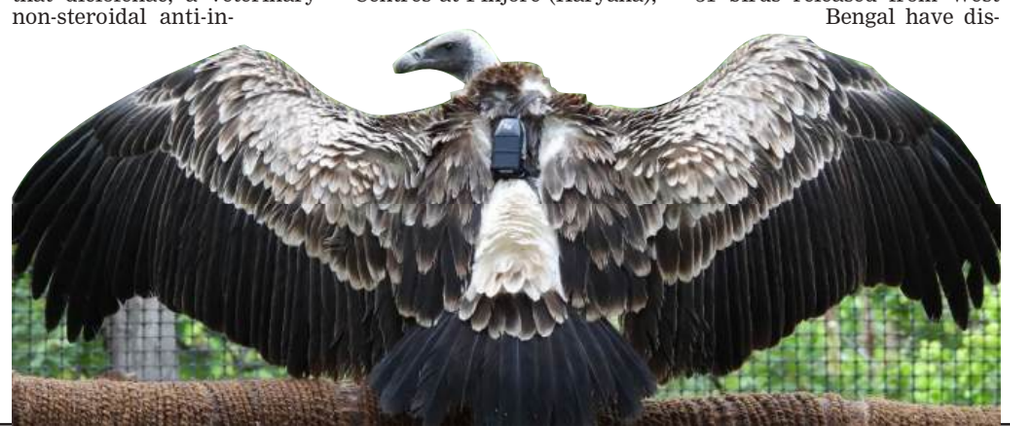
The BNHS first documented the sharp decline in vulture populations across the Indian subcontinent in 1999, and subsequent research established that diclofenac, a veterinary non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID), was responsible for mass mortality among the birds.

This finding prompted a ban on the drug in 2006, followed by subsequent prohibitions on other toxic variants like ketoprofen, aceclofenac, and nimesulide, Rithe said.

To prevent total extinction, the BNHS and state forest departments, with the support of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), established four Jatayu Conservation Breeding Centres at Pinjore (Haryana), Rajabhatkhawa (West Bengal), Rani (Assam), and Bhopal (Madhya Pradesh).

These facilities currently house 740 vultures. The programme has supplied 80 birds and released 110 vultures into the wild as part of reintroduction efforts.

The reintroduction efforts have already shown remarkable milestones, such as captive-bred white-rumped vultures released in Haryana in 2020 have begun breeding naturally in the wild. Meanwhile, 31 birds released from West Bengal have dispersed safely across India, Nepal, and Bhutan with zero reported NSAID-linked mortalities.



Maharashtra has emerged as a major centre for vulture reintroduction, with releases taking place in Pench, Tadoba-Andhari and Melghat Tiger Reserves.

Recent conservation focus has shifted heavily toward secure tiger reserves, such as Pench, Tadoba-Andhari, and Melghat, where large landscapes offer abundant natural carrion free from domestic cattle drugs.

As many as 20 vultures were transferred to Maharashtra from Haryana in 2024 and another 34 birds in 2025 for phased release programmes, while Assam initiated its first soft-release of slender-billed vultures in the Kaziranga landscape this March.

Conservationists said tiger reserves have become ideal release sites because large protected landscapes are largely free from harmful veterinary drugs and provide abundant natural food sources and wild carrion of deer species like chital and sambar.

Citizen-science surveys cited by BNHS have recorded increasing vulture population trends in several protected areas and tiger reserves, indicating that conservation measures and improved habitat protection are beginning to reverse decades of decline.

The programme is being implemented with support from the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, the Central Zoo Authority, state forest departments and several national and international conservation organisations. —*PTI*

What killed the vultures?

Diclofenac poisoning did. Diclofenac is a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug widely used in human medicine. It was introduced for veterinary use in India, Pakistan, and Nepal in the 1990s and was used to treat pain and inflammation in livestock. When the vultures ate these cattle carcasses, the toxicity of the drug spread in wild species. It wiped out at least 50 lakh endemic vultures.

Sri Lanka raises fuel prices amid West Asia conflict

COLOMBO, 31 MAY

Sri Lanka has increased retail fuel prices again due to ongoing conflict in the Middle East and global energy disruptions, announced by the state oil company, Ceylon Petroleum Corporation. The hike, effective from midnight Saturday, marks the fifth since March, following President Dissanayake's call for reduced consumption. Petrol prices rose by 5.85 per cent, and diesel by 3.83 per cent. Diesel now costs LKR 407 per litre, up LKR 15, while petrol is LKR 434, up from LKR 410. Kerosene increased by 20 rupees to LKR 285. The prices apply at all CPC stations nationwide. Since 1 March, petrol rose from 293 to 434 rupees. The Sri Lankan rupee has depreciated over 7 per cent since 22 May. *—PTI*

Eight killed after bus catches fire in Western Turkey

ISTANBUL, 31 MAY

A bus crashed and caught fire in western Turkiye early Sunday, leaving eight people dead, including a 9-month-old baby boy, local media reported. The bus, owned by Pamukkale Tourism, crashed into highway barriers in Denizli province at 1.40am. local time while carrying 38 passengers and three staff from Izmir to the Mediterranean city of Antalya, the Demiroren News Agency said. Some 33 people were injured in the incident. Among the dead were the 50-year-old driver and the father of the infant boy. Saturday was the final day of Eid al-Adha. The religious festival usually sees a spike in traffic accidents across Turkey as people travel to visit family and take vacations. *—PTI*

Syria flooded, over 2,400 families displaced

DEIR EZZOR, 31 MAY

The Syrian government continues emergency operations after water levels along the Euphrates surged, affecting 2,400 families. President Ahmad Al-Sharaa arrived to oversee the response, joined by ministers assessing conditions and resource needs. Finance Minister Mohamed Yisr Barnieh confirmed efforts to secure funding and support. Authorities, working with Civil Defence and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, evacuate residents and establish shelters. Power was disconnected in Huwaylat Saqr. Emergency Minister Raed Al-Saleh said the crisis phase had passed, with the Kadiran Dam in northern Syria reducing is discharge from 2,000 to 1,500 cubic metres per second, coordinating with Euphrates Dam to stabilise flows. *—AGENCIES*

Colombia heads to Presidential polls in test for Left

BOGOTA, 31 MAY

Colombia is set to elect a new President and Vice President in a vote seen as a referendum on Leftist President Gustavo Petro's policies. The election features 14 candidates, with Iván Cepeda, representing Petro's Historical Pact, and rivals Abelardo de la Espriella and Paloma Valencia leading the race. Cepeda promises to continue Petro's reforms, including raising minimum wages, taxing the wealthy, and pursuing peace talks with rebels, or calling for a constitutional rewrite if no agreement is reached. Valencia and de la Espriella oppose rewriting the Constitution and advocate increased force against rebels, tax cuts, and government reductions. Over 41.2 million voters, including 1.2 million abroad, will cast ballots, with a runoff scheduled if no candidate gains 50 per cent. *—PTI*

Israel captures Lebanese castle after 26 years

Israel says it is ready to expand operations

IDF soldiers at the strategic Beaufort castle that overlooks southern Lebanon, on Sunday *—X @AVICHAYADRAEE*

BEIRUT, 31 MAY

Israeli troops have captured a strategic mountain topped with a Crusader-built castle in southern Lebanon in their deepest incursion into the country in 26 years, the military said Sunday.

The capture of Beaufort castle near the city of Nabatiyeh came after days of intense fighting and airstrikes in nearby villages where Israeli troops fought Hezbollah members in the rugged area.

The Israeli military pushed passed the Litani River in Southern Lebanon that served as a de facto boundary earlier in the week, the deepest incursion in quarter a century. Notably, Israel and Lebanon have been at war since Israel was created in 1948, and are currently holding direct talks in Washington.

Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz wrote on X that his forces had raised an Israeli flag over the castle. Israeli troops previously captured the castle in 1982 and held it until they withdrew from Lebanon in 2000.

Israeli forces are now on the outskirts of Nabatieh, a city that is key to southern Lebanon's economy and a cultural hub for the region. Israel has asked citizens of both Nabatieh and the coastal city of Tyre to leave, even as nearly a million people are displaced in Lebanon. If the Shia-majority city were to fall, it would mark a significant development in Israel's war on Lebanon and the subsequent official ceasefire.

> **Netanyahu, I love and appreciate you, but now is the time to level (Beirut's) suburbs to the ground. We have appreciation for Trump and we must say thank you for the partnership. But the red line is the harm to soldiers or civilians, and the suburbs must be levelled to the ground**
>
> —Itamar Ben-Gvirm Israeli National Security Minister

> **(Israel is) pursuing a scorched-earth policy and collective punishment (by) destroying towns and villages.. (This is) not only a violation of Lebanon's sovereignty but also an attempt to erase history... not merely an expansion or incursion (but) a policy of complete destruction.**
>
> —Nawaf Salam, Lebanese Prime Minister

The Israeli military said in a statement that it launched an operation a few days ago in the Beaufort Ridge and the Suluki valley further south with the aim of dismantling Hezbollah infrastructure and removing "direct threats to Israeli civilians".

The statement said the army is ready "to expand the operation if needed".

The Israeli push came despite a nominal ceasefire that has been in place since 17 April and just days before the next round of talks are set to be held at the State Department on 2 and 3 June.

Hezbollah overnight claimed two attacks targeting Israeli troops and a Merkava tank in the southwestern town of Bayada near the border. In recent days, the group has said it has clashed with Israeli troops in several towns just north of the river near Nabatiyeh and the strategic castle.

The developments come after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said hte IDF would push deeper into Lebanon.

'MASSACRE' CONTINUES

At least eight people were killed and 16 others injured in Israeli airstrikes on the town of Deir al-Zahran, near Nabatieh. Lebanese state-run National News Agency described the bombing as a "massacre". Dozens of others were wounded as the bombing campaign continued across Lebanon. Overall, some 3,350 people have been killed in Lebanon. *—Agencies*

Close to 'very good deal' with Iran, claims Trump

WASHINGTON, 31 MAY

President Donald Trump has said the US and Iran are close to a "very good deal," but if Washington does not get what it wants, then it will "end it in a different way." Trump's comments on Saturday come amid reports that he has sought changes to the memorandum of understanding that Iranian and US negotiators had previously agreed upon.

"We're close to a very good deal. If you're going to be in a hurry, you're not going to make a good deal, and slowly but surely, we're getting what we want — and if we don't get what we want, we're going to end it a different way," Trump said on Fox News when he was interviewed by his daughter-in-law Lara Trump.

He said the Iranians are "good negotiators," but argued that the US now holds "all the cards" because Iran has been "militarily defeated."

Trump threatens Iran with the 'discombobulator' weapon used during the arrest of Venezuelan leader Nicolas Maduro *—TRUTHSOCIAL@REALDONALDTRUMP*

"But we're close to a very good deal. If we can make it, good. Otherwise we just start up with the Department of War as we call it," Trump said.

He said that the Iranians promised to not develop a nuclear weapon. "I said, well what happens if you buy a nuclear weapon? So now it says we will not develop or purchase a military weapon. That's a big difference".

The interview comes after a White House Situation Room, where Trump was expected to make a "final determination", ended without any significant announcement. However, US media outlet Axios reported that Trump asked for several amendments to the deal, which sought to extend the ceasefire by 60 days and allow naval traffic through the Strait of Hormuz. It may take up to three days for Iran to respond. *—PTI*

Better than Elvis: Trump to headline event as musicians bail

With several musical guests pulling out of the Great American State Fair, commemorating the 250th US anniversary, Trump said that he would headline the event. On Truth Social, Trump said that could get "much larger audiences than Elvis (Presley) in his prime", that too without a guitar. Among those who officially rescinded are Bret Michaels, Martina McBride, and Young MC. Flo Rida and Vanilla Ice will perform, among others.

Trump targets Pope for meeting 'useless' Dem Chicago Mayor

Trump targeted Pope Leo XIV for meeting "useless" Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson in Rome. Trump posted pictures of the Democrat meeting the Pope, who was born in Chicago, and wrote Someone should explain to the Pope that the Mayor of Chicago is useless, and that Iran cannot have a nuclear weapon." Trump has had several bouts with the Pope recently after the latter criticised the US' war on Iran.

46 killed, 70 wounded in blast at Myanmar building

BANGKOK, 31 MAY

A blast on Sunday at a building in northeastern Myanmar said to have been storing explosives for mining has killed more than 46 people, according to rescue workers and independent media reports.

About 70 other people were injured in the explosion that took place around noon in the village of Kaungtup, in Namhkam township, and 100 houses destroyed.

The area, located about 3km south of the Chinese border, is under the control of the Ta'ang National Liberation Army, an ethnic armed group fighting Myanmar's central government.

A rescue worker who rushed to the site of the blast told The Associated Press that 46 bodies, including six children, had been recovered by Sunday evening and taken for cremation. The rescuersaid 74 wounded people had been transported to the township hospital and rescue operations were continuing. *—PTI*

Japan rebuts China's claim of 'new militarism'

SINGAPORE, 31 MAY

- Tensions between Japan and China have been simmering over Taiwan. New PM Takaichi said Japan may be forced to defend Taiwan if China attacks

Japan's Defence Minister Shinjiro Koizumi rebutted China's claim that his country is engaging in a "new militarism" as American allies stressed the need for unity at the important Shangri-La defence summit in Singapore on Sunday.

As China has been rapidly expanding and modernising its military, Japan has been reshaping its own defence policy. Last month, Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's Cabinet scrapped a ban on lethal weapons exports, a major change in its postwar pacifist policy.

Koizumi praised US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth for his commitment to the Indo-Pacific, but at the same time stressed the continued need for strong coalitions globally.

"Division weakens deterrence, unity strengthens deterrence," he told the conference, hosted by the International Institute for Strategic Studies.

"If gaps emerge among the United States, Europe, and allies and like-minded countries, forces which take it as an opportunity will surely come in," he said. "We must prevent such a situation. Now is the time to make our cooperation even stronger."

"There is a country that has a huge arsenal of nuclear weapons and strategic bombers," he said. "Japan has neither of such weapons, and yet Japan is labelled as new militarism. Isn't it strange?" *—PTI*

5 killed, dozens injured in Russian strikes on Ukraine

KYIV, 31 MAY

At least 5 people were killed and 37 others injured in Russian drone and missile strikes on Ukraine, officials said on Saturday

Ukraine's Air Force said Russia launched 229 drones, 212 of which were intercepted. At least 14 drones struck 11 locations, while falling debris was recorded at five sites.

Twelve people were injured in Russian attacks in Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, including 11 in the Nikopol district and one in the Kryvyi Rih district, Governor Oleksandr Hanzha said. Two people were killed each in Zaporizhzhia and Donetsk.

Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy also confirmed that Kyiv has received a new German IRIS-T air defence launcher. Kyiv also denied claims that a Ukrainian drone struck a Kremlin-occupied nuclear plant after hitting Moscow's oil facilities earlier. *—PTI*

Russia launched 229 drones at Ukraine on Friday and Saturday *—UKRAINE EMERGENCY SERVICES*

Booms and shakes rock N America as meteor explodes

MASSACHUSETTS, 31 MAY

Reports of a double boom across New England on Saturday afternoon caused concern among police and residents. The American Meteor Society confirmed the noise originated from a meteor approximately three feet wide entering the atmosphere near the New Hampshire border with Massachusetts, north of Boston.

Robert Lunsford, Fireball Program Monitor, said the society received dozens of reports from Delaware to Montreal, with people hearing the booms, feeling the ground shake, or seeing the fireball — which he described as resembling a shooting star in daylight. "It was definitely bigger than a normal fireball, about a yard wide," he stated.

However, Lunsford indicated it's unlikely the meteor hit the ground. He explained, "We would need more information about the trajectory, speed, and other aspects to know for sure, but if it didn't burn up, then it would have landed in the ocean. Most of them burn up before they hit the ground." *—PTI*

CHAMPION'S LEAGUE FRENZY

Hundreds detained in Paris after riots over PSG's win

PARIS, 31 MAY

Hundreds of people were detained in Paris after clashes erupted between football fans and police late on Saturday following Paris Saint-Germain's second Champions League title win. At least 200 people were injured.

Fans began celebrating in Paris after the final whistle earlier in the evening in Budapest, Hungary, where PSG won by beating Arsenal on penalties in a dramatic final.

Fans marched along the avenues near the Arc de Triomphe, with some setting off flares and blaring car horns. Around 20,000 people gathered on the Champs-Elysees, with thousands of police deployed to contain the crowd.

The Paris police prefecture said smaller groups caused disturbances in various locations, with some vandalizing shops and setting fires. Cars were also set ablaze. One police officer was injured. Those who attempted to storm a police station in the posh 8th Arrondissement neighborhood were dispersed, police said.

At least 400 people were detained across France, including around 200 in Paris, police said.

The main ring road surrounding Paris was briefly blockaded by a crowd before police dispersed it. Police also said one bakery and a restaurant were damaged.

There was similar violence when PSG lifted their first title last year. At least 201 people were injured in Paris, and 500 arrested across France. *—Agencies*

A car burns as PSG supporters celebrate in Paris, on Saturday after Paris Saint-Germain beat Arsenal in the Champions League finals *—PTI*

Economy in crisis due to Iran war: Islamabadians

ISLAMABAD, 31 MAY

Growing tensions between the United States and Iran are fuelling fears of a fresh inflation crisis in Pakistan, leading citizens to call for an immediate end to hostilities. Several residents of Islamabad complained that inflation had risen by as much as 300 per cent, making it difficult for salaried workers and low-income families to meet basic expenses.

Citizens linked the recent surge in inflation to disruptions in global energy markets caused by the US-Iran confrontation and tensions surrounding the Strait of Hormuz, a critical oil shipping route.

They said petrol prices in Pakistan reportedly surged from around Rs 250 per litre to as high as Rs 450 before easing slightly to above Rs 400 per litre. Diesel prices have also increased similarly.

Residents argued that higher fuel prices inevitably lead to increases in public transport fares, food prices, and other essential goods.

Several speakers argued that military actions and missile strikes undermine diplomatic efforts and prolong instability in the region.

Residents also blamed the continued deadlock on geopolitical rivalries and alleged external interference in the peace process. *—ANI*

- They said petrol prices in Pakistan reportedly surged from around Rs 250 per litre to as high as Rs 450 before easing slightly to above Rs 400 per litre. Diesel prices have also increased similarly.

— PTI

Nara Lokesh to visit Russia to attract investments

AMARAVATI, 31 MAY

Andhra Pradesh IT Minister Nara Lokesh will visit Russia from 2 to 7 June to promote investment in the state. During his visit, he will attend the St Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF'26), a leading global business event. An official statement said, "Lokesh to visit Russia from 2 to 7 June, with the objective of attracting investments." The minister has been invited to participate in SPIEF'26 in St Petersburg, where international business leaders, policymakers, and industry figures will attend. He will hold meetings with key industrialists and investors to showcase investment opportunities in Andhra Pradesh. The visit aims to position the state as an attractive investment destination and attract projects across various sectors, the statement added. —*PTI*

Sanghi Industries drops case against Ambuja Cement

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

Alok Sanghi, former promoter of Sanghi Industries, has withdrawn his plea before the NCLAT after settling a dispute with Ambuja Cements, India's second-largest cement firm. The case involved Sanghi's personal guarantee of Rs 84 crore. Ambuja, which acquired Sanghi Industries in December 2023 for Rs 5,185 crore, had previously filed a plea against Sanghi in April 2026, which has now been withdrawn. Sanghi challenged an NCLT order from November 2025 regarding the insolvency plea over personal guarantee of Rs 84 crore extended by him.. The tribunal was informed of a settlement in April, leading to the withdrawal of the plea. On 26 May, the NCLAT dismissed the appeal as withdrawn. The dispute arose from unpaid electricity bills and the invocation of Sanghi's personal guarantee by Ambuja. —*PTI*

Suzlon Energy to challenge SEBI's Rs 29 cr penalty

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

Suzlon Energy Ltd announced it will appeal to the Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT) against a SEBI order imposing a penalty of Rs 28.95 crore. The regulator, through an order on 29 May 2026, set aside an earlier adjudication from June 2025, which had cleared Suzlon and its promoters of misrepresentation allegations. SEBI imposed Rs 15.95 crore on Suzlon, Rs 5.75 crore on Vinod R Tanti, Rs 5.45 crore on Girish R Tanti, Rs 1.5 crore on former CFO Kirti J Vagadi, and Rs 30 lakh on Amit Agarwal. Suzlon responded to a show-cause notice issued in September 2025, denying allegations and stating there would be no impact on its operations or finances. The company intends to file an appeal at SAT.—*PTI*

CCD returns to profit; revenue rises 5.7%

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

Coffee Day Global Ltd, operator of the Cafe Coffee Day chain, reported a profit after tax of Rs 14 crore in FY26, compared with a loss of Rs 175.92 crore in FY25. Revenue from operations rose 5.7 per cent to Rs 1,094 crore, while EBITDA increased 27 per cent to Rs 198 crore. Average Sales Per Day edged up to Rs 21,101 from Rs 21,016 a year earlier. However, the number of Café Coffee Day outlets fell to 424 from 435, and Same Store Sales Growth remained negative at 1.72 per cent. The company's vending machine business expanded to 55,802 units. Parent firm Coffee Day Enterprises Ltd posted a PAT of Rs 210.14 crore, with revenue rising 2.55 per cent to Rs 1,154.40 crore.—*PTI*

Govt cuts windfall tax on petrol, diesel, ATF exports

Airline Federation on 'verge of shutting down' seeks relief

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

— PTI

The government has halved the windfall gains tax on export of petrol to Rs 1.5 per litre, while reducing the levy on diesel to Rs 13.5 and aviation turbine fuel (ATF) to Rs 9.5/litre effective 1 June.

The windfall tax was levied to increase the domestic availability of fuel amid the ongoing US-Israel and Iran war.

The Federation of Indian Airlines (FIA), which represents Air India, IndiGo and SpiceJet, has warned that the sector is under "extreme stress", with some airlines on the "verge of shutting down", and has sought urgent relief on fuel pricing ahead of the next monthly revision.

It also aimed to prevent exporters from taking undue advantage of price differences, as global crude oil prices had risen since the war began. Crude oil prices have remained above USD 100 per barrel over the past week, from about USD 73 per barrel before the war.

The finance ministry, in a notification, said road and infrastructure cess will be nil on export of petrol and diesel. Also, there is no change in the existing duty rates on petrol and diesel cleared for domestic consumption.

The special additional excise duty (SAED) on petrol at Rs 3 per litre was imposed on 16 May, and the fortnightly review slashed it to Rs 1.5 from 1 June.

The export duty on diesel was cut to Rs 13.5 per litre from Rs 16.5, and on aviation turbine fuel to Rs 9.5 per litre from Rs 16, effective 1 June.

The government had imposed export duties of Rs 21.50 per litre on diesel and Rs 29.50 per litre on ATF on 26 March. In a review on 11 April, these were hiked to Rs 55.50 and Rs 42 per litre, respectively, then cut to Rs 23 and Rs 33 per litre in the 30 April review, and further reduced to Rs 16.50 and Rs 16 per litre on 16 May.

Windfall profit tax captures producer revenues above a set threshold, while fuel export levies target refiners' overseas margins, the difference between international oil prices and production costs. These taxes are used by the government to helps offset the fiscal losses. —*PTI*

BETTER MARKETS ABROAD

FPIs took out ₹33,000 cr in May amid weaker rupee

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) continued to reduce their exposure to Indian equities in May, withdrawing Rs 32,963 crore amid weak corporate earnings, rupee depreciation and more attractive opportunities in overseas markets.

According to NSDL data, total FPI outflows from Indian equities have reached Rs 2.25 lakh crore in 2026, surpassing the Rs 1.66 lakh crore withdrawn during the whole of 2025.

FPIs were net sellers in every month this year except February, when they invested Rs 22,615 crore, the highest monthly inflow in 17 months. They had pulled out Rs 35,962 crore in January before returning briefly as buyers. However, the trend reversed sharply in March with record outflows of Rs 1.17 lakh crore, followed by withdrawals of Rs 60,847 crore in April and nearly Rs 33,000 crore in May.

Market experts attributed the sustained selling to subdued earnings growth in India and stronger corporate performance in markets such as the US, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan. Geojit Investments Chief Investment Strategist VK Vijayakumar said the artificial intelligence-led rally in South Korea and Taiwan had attracted foreign capital away from India.

Centricity WealthTech's Sachin Jasuja said the rupee's depreciation, down nearly 6 per cent in 2026 and around 10 per cent over the past year to about 95.5 against the US dollar, has significantly eroded dollar-denominated returns for foreign investors. He added that rising crude oil prices and India's dependence on imports have worsened concerns over the current account deficit.

However, a sustained reversal in FPI flows is unlikely without a meaningful improvement in macroeconomic conditions. —*PTI*

Adani: AI infra ahead, US legal issues behind

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

In his annual letter to shareholders, Adani Group Chairman **Gautam Adani** said the conglomerate has left its US legal challenges behind and is focued on investments to capitalise on rising demand driven by AI.

Adani noted the legal and regulatory obstacles that have weighed on the group since late 2024, citing a Rs 24,930 crore rights issue in Adani Enterprises as a vote of confidence from investors.

The chairman outlined a strategy built on two converging growth drivers — infrastructure and intelligence — arguing that AI's rapid adoption will spur massive investment in power generation, transmission, data centres and logistics.

Adani says the group's biggest challenge is no longer access to capital but executing projects fast enough to meet India's infrastructure and energy needs, particularly as AI drives demand for power-intensive digital infrastructure.

"Before AI can think, energy must flow," Adani said, reiterating his view that future technological leadership will depend as much on physical infrastructure. The group has already invested over Rs 1.5 lakh crore in FY26 into renewable energy, transmission, ports, airports, data centres and manufacturing.

Adani Group faced scrutiny from US authorities over bribery claims tied to its renewable energy. US Securities and Exchange Commission settled the matter, while the US Justice Department has moved to drop all charges against Adani and others. —*PTI*

PRIMARY MARKET

CMR Green, Hexagon Nutrition to launch IPOs this week

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

India's primary market is set to see renewed activity next week with the initial public offerings (IPOs) of CMR Green Technologies and Hexagon Nutrition, together aiming to raise nearly Rs 770 crore.

Both issues are entirely offer-for-sale (OFS) offerings, meaning the companies will not receive any proceeds, with the funds going to existing shareholders.

The launches come amid subdued primary market activity caused by market volatility and global uncertainties. While several companies have secured regulatory approvals, many have delayed listing plans. So far in 2026, around 20 firms, including Fractal Analytics, Shadowfax Technologies and Bharat Coking Coal, have launched main-board IPOs.

- Both issues are offer-for-sale, meaning the firm will not receive any proceeds, with the funds going to existing shareholders.

CMR Green Technologies' Rs 630.62-crore IPO will open from 3 to 5 June, with anchor bidding on 2 June. The company has fixed a price band of Rs 182-192 per share. The issue comprises an OFS of up to 3.28 crore shares by promoters and an investor shareholder.

Faridabad-based CMR Green recycles non-ferrous metals and operates 13 facilities across India, serving major automotive manufacturers and suppliers.

Hexagon's Rs 139-crore IPO opens from 5 to 9 June, with anchor bidding on 4 June.

The company has set a price band of Rs 42-45 per share. Founded in 1993, Hexagon Nutrition markets brands such as Pentasure, Obesigo and Pediagold and operates in 75 countries. CMR Green and Hexagon are expected to list on 10 June and 12 June, respectively. —*PTI*

RIL hit as 7 top firms' mcap falls by ₹1.54L

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

The combined market capitalisation of seven of India's 10 most-valued companies declined by Rs 1.54 lakh crore last week, led by Reliance Industries.

In the holiday-shortened week, the BSE Sensex fell 639.61 points (0.84 per cent) and the NSE Nifty lost 171.55 points (0.72 per cent).

Reliance Industries recorded the biggest erosion, with its valuation falling Rs 46,078.3 crore to Rs 17.87 lakh crore. HDFC Bank shed Rs 33,333.06 crore, while Bharti Airtel, Tata Consultancy Services, Hindustan Unilever, Bajaj Finance and ICICI Bank fell.

On the other hand, Larsen & Toubro added Rs 20,608.43 crore in market value, while State Bank of India and Life Insurance Corp of India gained Rs 13,753.62 crore and Rs 6,040.37 crore, respectively.

Reliance remained India's most-valued company, followed by HDFC Bank and Bharti Airtel. —*PTI*

Tata's Trent remains in early growth phase, aims for 10x revenue: Noel

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

Tata Group retail company Trent is still in the early stages of its growth journey, despite recent rapid expansion, said Chairman **Noel N Tata**. Speaking in Trent's latest annual report, Tata expressed confidence that the firm will reach its ambitious goal of becoming ten times larger in revenue in the "not-so-distant future".

Trent owns Westside, Zudio, and Star Bazaar. Tata highlighted that future growth would be driven by building distinct propositions across categories and expanding homegrown brands internationally.

Referring to his remarks at Trent's 2023 shareholders' meeting, Tata said he envisaged the company becoming ten times larger in revenue with similar profitability. In FY26, Trent's revenue was Rs 19,701 crore, with 1,286 stores across 321 cities. Tata also emphasised Trent's global ambitions, stating it would be "enormously satisfying" to build Indian brands with international relevance.

He added, "We should aspire boldly, execute with perseverance and celebrate the pride of brands built ground up from India." Reflecting on Trent's 25-year journey, Tata described its evolution from a single store in Bengaluru to a portfolio of brands, supported by growth engines like Zudio and Star. —*PTI*

NLC & RIL TIE UP FOR LIGNITE GASIFICATION IN GUJARAT

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

NLC India Ltd (NLCIL) and Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) have signed an agreement to jointly explore the feasibility of developing an underground lignite gasification project in Gujarat, aimed at boosting domestic gasified fuel supplies amid global energy constraints.

Under the partnership, the companies will assess the technical viability of converting lignite reserves into synthesis gas through underground gasification. NLCIL's two lignite blocks in Gujarat are being considered for the project, with preliminary technical studies already under way. Reliance has been brought on board for its expertise in gasification.

NLCIL and RIL will assess the viability of converting lignite reserves into synthesis gas through underground gasificationn —*RELIANCE INDUSTRIES LTD*

It is expected to address domestic gas shortages and reduce dependence on imported liquefied natural gas. Underground lignite gasification converts in-situ lignite into synthesis gas, for fuel or feedstock in chemical and fertiliser industries.

NLCIL is also developing a Rs 4,394-crore lignite-to-methanol plant at Neyveli in Tamil Nadu, scheduled for completion next year as part of its diversification strategy.

The initiative aligns with the Centre's coal gasification programme. The Union Cabinet recently approved a Rs 37,500-crore scheme to promote coal and lignite gasification, targeting 100 million tonnes by 2030 to reduce import dependence. —*PTI*

WAR NOT SOLE REASON

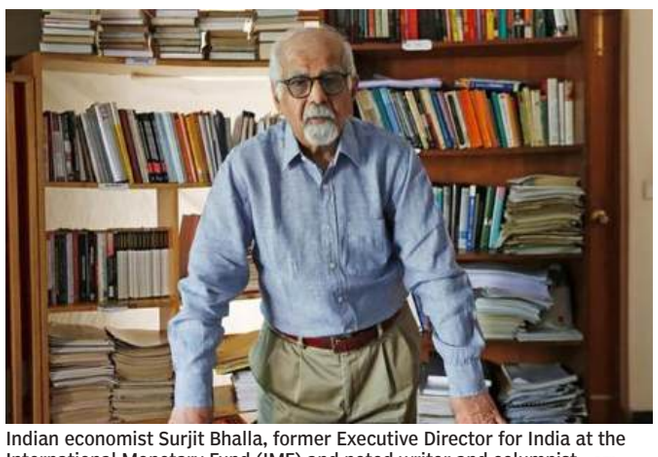
'Weak private investment driving slump'

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

Renowned Indian economist Surjit Bhalla said that weak private investment is the key factor in India's slowing economic growth, not the West Asia crisis.

India's strong GDP from the past six to eight months — which he described as the economy "shining" — was misleading, Bhalla said, as growth was driven by government spending while private investment remained weak.

Reflecting on that earlier "shining" period, "By all standard measures... GDP growth was perfectly fine. You look at inflation, very low? But the problem is that there was very little private investment, or private investment had gone down," he said.



Indian economist Surjit Bhalla, former Executive Director for India at the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and noted writer and columnist—*PTI*

However, according to Bhalla, GDP growth remained strong mainly because the government was investing. He argued that government spending is less efficient than private sector investment. "Infrastructure has more corruption, more everything else. So the bang for the buck that you get with government investment is not as good as the bang that you get with private investment," he said.

He attributed this partly to policy changes introduced after 2015, particularly the bilateral investment treaty framework. "We have made it very difficult for foreign investors to invest in India.

To revive investment, Bhalla calls for restoring pre-2015 bilateral investment treaty, ending retrospective taxation, lower taxes on foreign investors and supporting export-oriented manufacturing.

Acknowledging that the ongoing conflict does affect India's economy, Bhalla said his analysis was based entirely on data from before January 2026 and was therefore unrelated to the crisis. —*ANI*

LIC plans foray in fintech, strategic investment: CEO

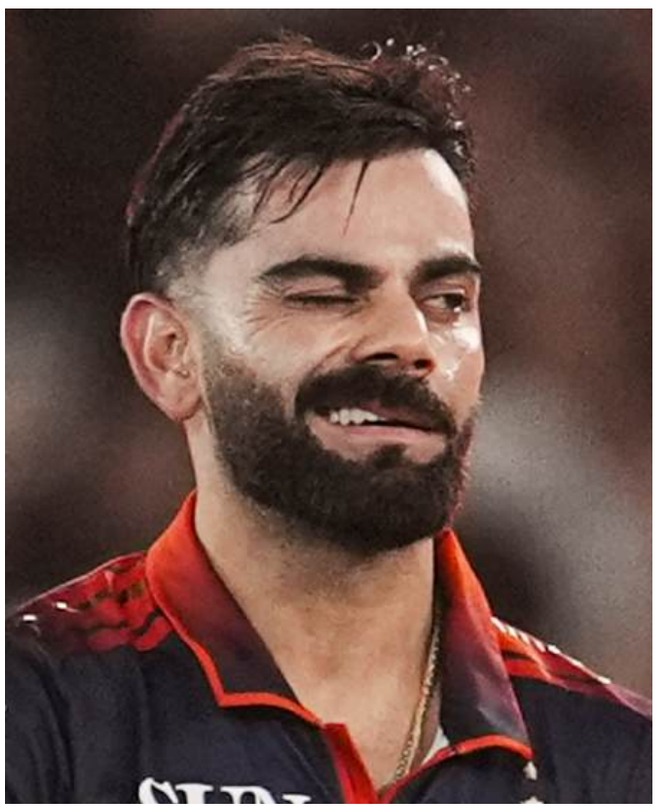
NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

LIC is exploring the creation of a fintech arm, either through strategic investment or organic growth, to meet its increasing digital needs, said CEO and MD R Doraiswamy. "To meet the modernisation requirement and bring innovation, we are engaging both fintech and insurtech players," he told. He added, "we are a large financial institution investing in multiple organisations and look at strategic investments to enhance returns for policyholders."

Doraiswamy highlighted LIC's early adoption of digital technology, stating, "We built our own core competence but also engaged a lot of IT service providers." He explained that LIC is evaluating various options for IT modernisation, aiming to make applications more agile.

LIC CEO, MD Doraiswamy —*PTI*

Regarding further government stake dilution, he said, "We have been prepared from day one, and the government's decision will be respected." LIC's IPO in 2022 raised Rs 21,000 crore by diluting 3.5 per cent stake. Post-IPO, LIC announced a 1:1 bonus and increased dividends. In March, LIC posted a 23 per cent rise in net profit to Rs 23,420 crore, its highest in the country. —*PTI*



THE KING'S NIGHT

GT struggled on the night that belonged entirely to RCB and Kohli

Virat Kohli celebrates after winning the final; RCB's Jitesh Sharma stumps Gujarat Titans' Jos Buttler as spectators cheer from the stands during IPL 2026 final at Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad on Sunday —PTI/ANI

AHMEDABAD, 31 MAY

The RCB dugout transformed into a school children's after examination party.

Skipper Rajat Patidar, who joined MS Dhoni and Rohit Sharma as the only captain to have defended an IPL title, shed his usual stoic face, breaking into a wide grin.

Others around him rushed to the field to gather around Kohli, the beating heart of his franchise since 2008.

But before Kohli put on display his undimmed abilities in white ball format, RCB bowlers exploited a slow pitch to perfection, restricting a lethargic Gujarat Titans to a sub-par 155 for eight.

Shot-making was not exactly an easy proposition on the pitch No. 6 at the Narendra Modi stadium, a mix of red and black soil, and it aptly reflected in the GT batting.

Washington Sundar resisted the trend with an unbeaten 50 (37b, 5x4), but the damage around him was far too big.

The fatigue of playing Qualifier 2 on Friday and a delayed departure because of inclement weather at Mullanpur also might have added to their woes.

But none of that should not take any credit away from the RCB bowlers.

The Titans needed skipper Gill and his opening partner B Sai Sudharsan to fire upfront to pile a competitive total, but they failed.

A steady beginning was not alien to GT openers but Gill's swat off Josh Hazlewood (2/37) took the leading edge of his bat to create a simple catch for his opposite number Patidar.

The GT batting lost its rudders, ending an underwhelming Power Play phase at 45 for two. That the Titans had to wait till the 13th over for the first six off their innings underlined GT's turmoil.

A MOMENT OF SUSPENSE

Kohli was seen frustrated with the umpire's decision to adjudge him out. The suspenseful moment happened on the final ball of the 16th over of RCB's chase. Kohli hit Arshad Khan's ball towards mid-off. Shubman Gill dived for the catch, but Kohli said the GT captain grassed the ball. A third umpire confirmed that the ball indeed touched the ground slightly and said Kohli was not out. —PTI

IPL winner to get Rs 20 crore prize

The BCCI has earmarked a prize pool of more than Rs 46.5 crore for IPL 2026, with the champions set to receive Rs 20 crore and the runners-up Rs 13 crore. The team losing Qualifier 2 will earn Rs 7 crore, while the Eliminator loser will take home Rs 6.5 crore. Franchises finishing between fifth and 10th positions will not receive prize money —PTI

Tendulkar bats for IPL rule changes

MUMBAI, 31 MAY

Batting great Sachin Tendulkar has called for significant rule changes in the IPL to restore the balance between bat and ball, while also leading tributes to teenage sensation Vaibhav Sooryavanshi following his stunning playoff innings.

Speaking at the ESPNcricinfo Awards, Tendulkar urged the IPL to scrap the Impact Player rule, introduced in 2023, arguing that it gives batting sides an unfair advantage in a format already dominated by batters.

He also proposed splitting the six-over powerplay, with the first four overs remaining a batting powerplay and the final two overs available as a bowling powerplay at the fielding captain's discretion. He also suggested allowing one bowler to deliver five overs instead of the current four, enabling teams to utilise their best bowler for a greater portion of the innings. Meanwhile, Tendulkar hailed Rajasthan Royals' 15-year-old opener Vaibhav Soorya vanshi after his explosive 97 off 29 balls against Sunrisers Hyderabad in the IPL Eliminator.

The knock helped Rajasthan secure a 47-run victory and a place in Qualifier 2, while Sooryavanshi surpassed Gayle's record for most sixes in a single IPL season with 65. —PTI

Vaibhav becomes youngest batter to win Orange Cap

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

Rajasthan Royals prodigy Vaibhav Sooryavanshi became the youngest player to win the IPL Orange Cap after Gujarat Titans openers Shubman Gill and Sai Sudharsan failed to overhaul his tally in the final against RCB.

At just 15 years and 65 days, the Bihar teenager shattered the previous record held by Sudharsan, who won the award aged 23 in 2025.

Sooryavanshi finished with 776 runs from 16 matches at a strike rate of 237.31. He also smashed a record 72 sixes, surpassing Chris Gayle's long-standing mark of 59 in a season. He also reached 1,000 IPL runs in a record 440 balls and became the second-fastest to the milestone in innings terms, achieving it in 23 innings. He scored one century this season. —ANI

Satwik-Chirag end title drought with maiden Singapore Open crown

SINGAPORE, 31 MAY

Former world No. 1 pair Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty ended their long title drought in style, coming from a game down to defeat Indonesia's Fajar Alfian and Muhammad Shohibul Fikri in the men's doubles final of the BWF Singapore Open Super 750 on Sunday.

The Asian Games and Commonwealth Games medallists prevailed 18-21, 21-17, 21-16 in 1 hour 13 minutes to claim their first title in two years, ninth World Tour crown overall, and third Super 750 triumph. They also became the first Indian pair to win the Singapore Open doubles title.

It was their first trophy since the Thailand Open 2024, having lost four finals in the intervening period. The world No. 4 duo also avenged recent defeats against the Indonesians, improving their head-to-head record.

After losing a tight opening game, the Indians raised their intensity, with Satwik's powerful smashes and Chirag's sharp net play turning the contest around. They dominated the second game and carried momentum into the decider, where a strong mid-game surge proved decisive.

The pair had earlier stunned reigning world champions Kim Won Ho and Seo Seung Jae in the semifinals, capping a strong week.

Chirag fell to the court in celebration after the winning point, before the duo shared emotional on-court celebrations to seal a long-awaited return to the top. —PTI

NORWAY CHESS CAMPAIGN

Gukesh downs Praggs to revive title hopes

OSLO, 31 MAY

A day after celebrating his 20th birthday, D Gukesh revived his Norway Chess campaign with a hard-fought classical victory over fellow Indian R Praggnanandhaa, earning three points and climbing to third place in the standings.

The world champion moved to 6.5 points after prevailing in a tense Round 5 encounter that swung repeatedly between the two players. Playing a Ragozin Defence, Praggnanandhaa appeared to hold the advantage early on, but a costly error during a time scramble around move 40 allowed Gukesh to seize control and launch a decisive checkmate attack.

The win lifted Gukesh above Praggnanandhaa, who remained fourth on six points. Tournament leader Alireza Firouzja strengthened his position with 10 points after defeating Germany's Vincent Keymer, while American Wesley So moved to second on 8.5 points by stunning reigning champion Magnus Carlsen.

- Playing a Ragozin Defence, Praggnanandhaa appeared to hold the advantage early on, but a costly error during a time scramble around move 40 allowed Gukesh to seize control

Carlsen's defeat left the world No. 1 at the bottom of the six-player standings on 4.5 points. Gukesh said he felt sharper than he had in recent months and believed continued good performances would bring better results.

In the women's section, India's Divya Deshmukh surged into sole lead on 8.5 points after defeating China's Zhu Jiner in an 84-move classical battle.

Zhu missed a chance to force a draw before Divya capitalised under severe time pressure.

Elsewhere, Koneru Humpy defeated China's Ju Wenjun, while Ukraine's Anna Muzychuk overcame Bibisara Assaubayeva. —PTI

Coco Gauff's French Open journey ends

PARIS, 31 MAY

Coco Gauff's French Open title defence was ended by Anastasia Potapova, who produced a 4-6, 7-6 (1), 6-4 victory over Gauff in the third round on Saturday.

"She was able to finish the points and I wasn't," Gauff said. "Coco is such a champion. I respect her so much," Potapova said.

Meanwhile, Naomi Osaka beat 18-year-old American opponent Iva Jovic 7-6 (5), 6-7 (3), 6-4 after nearly three hours — in her 100th Grand Slam match — to set up a round-of-16 meeting with top-ranked Aryna Sabalenka. Sabalenka beat Daria Kasatkina 6-0, 7-5.

Both Osaka's game and her outfit stole the show. She wore a metallic gold bomber jacket over a sequined gold playing dress with a tan-gold overskirt.

"For me, it would be weirder to wear a normal tennis kit, almost, at this point," Osaka said. "Now I just want things to be fun."

TIAFOE AND FARIA ARGUE ON COURT

Meanwhile US player Frances Tiafoe exchanged some strong words with his opponent, Portuguese qualifier Jaime Faria, about a call early in the fifth set. "Don't act like you're tough. You're not hard, bro. Just play," Tiafoe told Faria. The chair umpire told both players to be quiet, after Faria complained. Tiafoe won the third-round match 4-6, 6-7 (2), 7-6 (4), 6-1, 6-2 in four hours.

Tiafoe next meets Matteo Arnaldi, who eliminated Raphael Collignon in a fifth-set tiebreaker. —PTI

Kamali Moorthy completes double title at Indian Open

MANGALURU, 31 MAY

Tamil Nadu teenager Kamali Moorthy, who has secured India's surfing quota for the upcoming Asian Games, completed a double by winning both the Women's Open and Surfing Juniors U-18 Girls titles at the seventh NMPA Indian Open of Surfing on Sunday. The event is a key selection trial for India's Asian Games squad. Kamali successfully defended her crown with a score of 13.17 in the Women's Open, finishing ahead of Sugar Shanti Banarse (11.73) and Shrishti Selvam (8.50). Tamil Nadu's Kishore Kumar won the Men's Open title with 15.20, ahead of Ramesh Budihal, Sivaraj Babu and Srikanth D. Local surfer Pradeep Pujar took the U-18 Boys title, while Harish P and Dhamayanthi Sriram won the U-14 Boys and Girls categories respectively. Selections for the Asian Games team will be based on this event, the Andaman Little Pro 2026, coaching camps, international performances and rankings. —PTI

SAME GAME, DIFFERENT STANDS

For Gukesh, 20, pressure of being champ is an opportunity

OSLO, 30 MAY

As he turns 20, reigning World Chess Champion D Gukesh is learning to balance the immense expectations that come with holding the sport's highest title. With a world championship defence against Uzbekistan's Javokhir Sindarov looming later this year, the Indian Grandmaster views the pressure not as a burden alone, but as an opportunity for growth.

Speaking ahead of his birthday, Gukesh admitted that dealing with expectations has been one of the toughest aspects of his rapid rise. "It's something I've had to deal with and sometimes struggled with. But pressure is also a privilege. It's a chance for me to grow through the challenge," he said.

The Chennai-born prodigy reflected on the past 18 months, describing them as demanding but transformative. "They have helped me build character and become a better person in general," he added. Gukesh remains one of the star attractions at the Norway Chess tournament, where organisers used the rest day to take players from the Open and Women's events on a sailing trip through the Oslofjord. The outing provided a welcome break from competition and an opportunity to recharge.

Gukesh admitted that dealing with expectations has been one of the toughest aspects of his rapid rise —X/NORWAYCHESS

However, Gukesh's demeanour reflected a difficult start to the tournament, where he currently sits at the bottom of the six-player standings.

Despite the challenges, the champion said he enjoys the process of preparing for a title defence against a specific opponent over several months. Yet he acknowledged that managing expectations remains a work in progress and hopes to handle them better in future. —PTI

Carlsen says age is taking its toll after Norway struggles

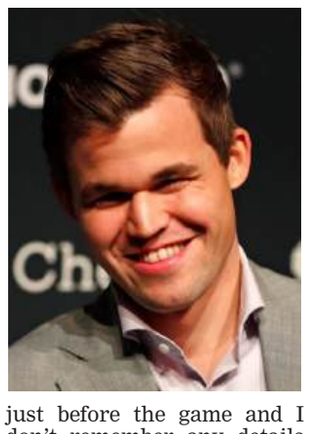
OSLO, 31 MAY

Magnus Carlsen offered a rare glimpse into his vulnerabilities at Norway Chess, joking that "we're getting old" as he reflected on memory lapses, declining energy levels and the pressures that once came with being world champion.

The comment came during his game against American Grandmaster Wesley So, who went on to defeat the world No. 1 in classical chess for only the second time in his career — both victories coming at Norway Chess. The loss left Carlsen surprisingly rooted to the bottom of the six-player standings.

Speaking from the tournament's confessional booth, a Norway Chess feature that allows players to share thoughts during games, the 35-year-old revealed he had recently discussed memory struggles with a close friend of the same age.

"I was checking these lines just before the game and I don't remember any details whatsoever," Carlsen admitted, adding that he had resorted to coffee to boost his energy — something he "never used to do".



A seven-time Norway Chess champion and winner of more than 20 world titles, including five classical crowns, Carlsen stepped away from the World Championship cycle in 2022, citing the increasingly demanding preparation and waning motivation.

- Speaking from the tournament's confessional booth, a Norway Chess feature that allows players to share thoughts during games, the 35-year-old revealed he had recently discussed his memory struggles with a close friend of the same age

Reflecting on his decision to leave the world championship cycle, Carlsen said the expectations attached to the title had become burdensome. "I often felt I was doing it for others rather than myself," he said, adding that the spotlight now rightly belongs to world champion Gukesh and challenger Javokhir Sindarov. —PTI